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from

W. J. Goodrich

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE  
GREEK GENIUS

"Who, when this planet's sphereing time doth close  
shall be its' high remembrancers: who they?  
The mighty men who have made eternal day  
For Greece & England."  
Endymion

International Study Centre  
Canterbury Cathedral  
Canterbury Cathedral



# SOME ASPECTS OF THE GREEK GENIUS

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## PREFACE

THIS volume consists chiefly of lectures delivered to the Greek Class at the University of Edinburgh. It includes also one or two addresses, more or less popular in character, given to other audiences, and an article on Sophocles, which is reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*. There is little, I fear, in these pages which can be of value to the professed scholar in any given department of Greek learning. But there are many persons who have had a classical education and yet are not specialists, and who may care to have some of the impressions that are left on the mind by the study of Greek literature revived and brought to a focus. There are also some who, without a knowledge of the Greek language, have acquired a love of Greek literature and an interest in the thought of Greece. To both classes of readers this book is addressed.

The sections on "Aristotle's conception of Fine Art and Poetry" are the substance of lectures which accompanied the detailed reading of the text of the *Poetics*. They are not meant to be a complete introduction to that treatise. Their purpose is to bring out the main line of connection between Aristotle's theory of Poetry as an expression of "the universal," and the general system of his philosophic thought. The inquiry has inherent difficulties in it from the fragmentary nature of our material; but I trust that here and there some light may be thrown on particular problems. Of the many questions raised or suggested by the *Poetics* itself, three only are here treated with any minuteness, namely, "The different manner in which Tragedy and Comedy universalise Character," "The Function of Tragedy," and "The relation of Plot and Character in Tragedy." If the earlier part of the paper on Aristotle is hard reading for those who do not already know the outlines of his philosophy, the central idea, at least, of his poetic criticism is, I hope, made plain in the later sections (iv. to ix.) For the sake of clearness I have added a short analysis of the whole paper.

Poetry, as explained by Aristotle, is an expression of "the universal." But "the universal" is in a sense the characteristic note of all the products of the Greek genius. The accidents of human nature seem in them to fall into the background; its larger lineaments are disengaged. The image presented to us is a typical embodiment of some permanent fact or aspect of human life. Hence the powerful vitality of all that has been bequeathed to us by Greece. It is modern almost as truly as it is ancient; for it rests on the essential sameness under all circumstances of man's nature and faculties. The more it is studied the more links we find with our own world of thought and feeling. And, above all, it is stamped with the impress of an art which belongs to all time. So far as the contents of this volume possess any unity they are little else than a variation on this single theme.

*October 1891.*





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## WHAT WE OWE TO GREECE<sup>1</sup>

THE question to which I would here attempt an answer in rudest outline is, What do we owe to Greece? what is the secret of her power and permanence? what of her own has she contributed to the world's common store? what is her place in history? If we find, as I think we shall, that Hellenism has not given us enough to live by, yet we shall also see how greatly they misread the mind of Greece who think to become Hellenic by means of eccentricity tinged with vice.

First, then, the Greeks, before any other people of antiquity, possessed the love of knowledge for its own sake. To see things as they really are, to discern their meanings and adjust their relations, was with them an instinct and a passion. Their methods in science and philosophy might be very

<sup>1</sup> An Inaugural Address delivered at the opening of the Greek Class in the University of Edinburgh, October 31, 1882. Purely personal references are omitted in this reprint and some topics are expanded.

faulty, and their conclusions often absurd, but they had that fearlessness of intellect which is the first condition of seeing truly. Poets and philosophers alike looked with unflinching eye on all that met them, on man and the world, on life and death. They interrogated Nature, and sought to wrest her secret from her, without misgiving and without afterthought. Greece, first smitten with the passion for truth, had the courage to put faith in reason, and in following its guidance, to take no count of consequences. "Those," says Aristotle, "who would rightly judge the truth, must be arbitrators and not litigants."<sup>1</sup> "Let us follow the argument whithersoever it leads," may be taken not only as the motto of the Platonic philosophy, but as expressing one side of the Greek genius.

The Eastern nations, speaking generally, had loved to move in a region of twilight, content with that half-knowledge which stimulates the religious sense. They had thought it impious to draw aside the veil which hides God from man. They had shrunk in holy awe from the study of causes, from inquiries into origin, from explaining the perplexed ways of the universe. Ignorance had been the sacred duty of the layman. Scientific

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *de Caelo* i. 10. 279 b 11.

questioning and discovery could hardly exist where (as in many parts of the East) each fresh gain of earth was thought to be so much robbery of heaven.

At the moment when Greece first comes into the main current of the world's history, we find a quickened and stirring sense of personality, and a free play of intellect and imagination. The oppressive silence with which Nature and her unexplained forces had brooded over man is broken. Not that the Greek temper is irreverent, or strips the universe of mystery. The mystery is still there and felt, and has left many undertones of sadness in the bright and heroic records of Greece ; but the sense of mystery has not yet become mysticism. One writer, it is true, whose temper was that of the mystic, appeared in Greece in the first half of the fifth century B.C., Empedocles of Agrigentum. At once poet, priest, and philosopher, skilled in medicine and a student of natural science, this striking and poetic figure passed in pomp through the towns of Sicily, a healer of the diseases both of mind and body. He speaks of himself as a heavenly spirit, exiled from the company of the blest, who for the taint of crime is condemned to be incarnate upon earth.

As a fallen intellect he has lost the full and unbroken vision of the universe ; still he is gifted with an insight beyond common men into the truth of things, and speaks with lofty pity of mankind, who, knowing nothing, “boast that they have found out the whole—an idle boast ; for this the eye of man hath not seen, nor hath his ear heard, nor can his mind conceive it.” He himself shrinks from learning more than it is given to human wisdom to know. He would tell only such things “as creatures of a day may reverently hear” (*ὅν θέμις ἐστὶν ἐφημερίοισιν ἀκούειν*), and prays the Muse who inspires him to “guide her light car from the dwelling of Piety.” Such cautious reverence, alternating with bold utterances made in moments of illumination, is rarely met with in Greek literature. Greek thinkers are not afraid lest they should be guilty of prying into the hidden things of the gods. They held frank companionship with thoughts that had paralysed Eastern nations into dumbness or inactivity, and in their clear gaze there is no ignoble terror. Inroads, indeed, there were at times from the East of strange gods and fanatical rites ; and half-lit spaces always remained, in which forms of faith or ritual, lower as well as higher than the popular



creed, took shelter ; but, on the whole, we are henceforth in an upper and serener air, in which man's spiritual and intellectual freedom is assured.

“ Know thyself ” is the answer which the Greek offers to the Sphinx's riddle. How truly does all Greek literature and art respond to the command ! When philosophy had as yet scarcely begun to look inward, the poets,—Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles,—with large and impartial observation, had reflected human life. Euripides, indeed, stands on the confines of a new poetic age. He enlarged the range of poetic imitation, and made his tragedy to reflect more closely “ the whole tragi-comedy of life.”<sup>1</sup> The old classic clearness of outline and precision of form are already being blurred. The image is presented to us in shifting lights and through a disturbing and refracting medium. There is an intrusion of the pathetic element, a portrayal of transient and unruly emotions, for the better exhibition of which the poet seeks out striking situations. He projects his own personal trouble and the colour of his times into his art. A sense is left of contradiction and disquiet, of vague and inarticulate wants. The doubtful

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Phil.* 50 B, τῇ τοῦ βίου ξυμπᾶσθι τραγωδίᾳ καὶ κωμῳδίᾳ.

gleams of a romantic light already play over the surface of the Euripidean tragedy; the echoes are heard of a music dying away in the distance and baffling the ears which are strained to catch it. Euripides provokes questioning and reflection; he does not, like Aeschylus and Sophocles, lead to a reverent acquiescence in the mystery of things. But they and he alike look with unaverted eye on the mixed spectacle of life, and accept with fortitude whatever may be appointed. "Now observe," says Mr. Ruskin, his primary reference being to Homer, "that in their dealings with all these subjects the Greeks never shrink from horror; down to its uttermost depth, to its most appalling physical detail, they strive to sound the secrets of sorrow. For them there is no passing by on the other side, no turning away the eyes to vanity from pain. . . . Whether there be consolation for them or not, neither apathy nor blindness shall be their saviour: if for them, thus knowing the facts of the grief of earth, any hope, relief, or triumph may hereafter seem possible,—well; but if not, still hopeless, reliefless, eternal, the sorrow shall be met face to face."<sup>1</sup>

But to the Greeks "Know thyself" meant not

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, v. 215.

only to know *man*, but—a less pleasing task—to know *foreigners*. And to this study they were impelled not solely, or even chiefly, by a commercial and gain-seeking instinct, such as moved the Phoenicians, but by a single-hearted desire to know. It was a new thing in the world. The people of ancient India did not care to penetrate beyond their mountain barriers and to know their neighbours. The Egyptians, though in certain branches of science they had made progress,—in medicine, in geometry, in astronomy,—had acquired no scientific geography, for they kept to themselves. But the Greeks were travellers. Of Odysseus it is said: “Many were the men whose towns he saw and whose mind he learned;” and in this respect he is typical of his race. We are often told that the Greeks were exclusive; and their phrase “barbarian” for a foreigner looks a little ugly and contemptuous. But the invidious meaning was acquired only by degrees, and not, perhaps, without reason; in any case it is a less invidious term than that of “devils,” by which many Easterns have designated their neighbours. And what is more significant, Aristotle thought it worth his while to analyse and describe the constitutions of a hundred and fifty-eight states, in-

cluding in his survey not only Greek states, but those of the barbarian world. He was the first student of what we call Comparative Politics.

The ripe science of Aristotle may be found already in germ in the history of Herodotus. While his history is marching forward on epic lines and with quickening speed to the great conflict between the West and the East, between the Greeks and the Barbarians, yet he has no hard words for the Barbarians. He can view them with candid surprise and impartiality. There is no pause but no haste. He finds time to linger by the way, and exhibits the open-eyed delight of a child who is introduced for the first time into a strange world, where everything, great and small, is alike interesting and worthy of an intent regard. With him we trace the courses of rivers, the movements of tribes ; we touch and handle rare objects of nature or of art ; we wander through temples hitherto unexplored, we hear him questioning the priests in a tone whose secular curiosity is tempered only by a native piety. There is more here than the unembarrassed wonder of childhood ; there is doubt as well as wonder, reflection as well as observation ; he compares his reports, he weighs his evidence, he is conscious of his own office as

an inquirer after truth. A fact interests him simply because it is true, apart from its emotional or poetic value. Nor does he merely note the facts, he seeks to discover the law which governs them. This law has generally a religious basis. "The providence of the deity"<sup>1</sup> reveals itself even in the habits of the animal kingdom; and to acts of divine intervention he ascribes the more impressive of human events. Yet in spite of his belief in a jealous God, who humbles human greatness and "suffers none but himself to be haughty," the genius of criticism, the spirit of science, is already awake.

It was the privilege of the Greeks to discover the sovereign efficacy of reason. They entered on the pursuit of knowledge with a sure and joyous instinct. Baffled and puzzled they might be, but they never grew weary of the quest. The speculative faculty which reached its height in Plato and Aristotle, was, when we make due allowance for time and circumstance, scarcely less eminent in the Ionian philosophers; and it was Ionia that gave birth to an idea, which was foreign to the East, but has become the starting-point of modern science,—the idea that Nature works by

<sup>1</sup> Herod. iii. 108, τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ πρόνοια.

fixed laws. A fragment of Euripides speaks of him as "happy who has learned to search into causes," who "discerns the deathless and ageless order of nature, whence it arose, the how and the why."<sup>1</sup> The early poet-philosophers of Ionia gave the impulse which has carried the human intellect forward across the line which separates empirical from scientific knowledge; and the Greek precocity of mind in this direction, unlike that of the Orientals, had in it the promise of uninterrupted advance in the future,—of great discoveries in mathematics, geometry, experimental physics, in medicine also and physiology. Already in Heraclitus (*circ.* 513 B.C.) the one thing permanent in a world of change is the law which governs that change. The physical order of the universe is under the guardianship of the same powers that uphold the moral order. "Helios will not overpass his appointed bounds, or the

<sup>1</sup> Eurip. *Frag.* (Nauck 902)—

ὄλβιος ὅστις τῆς ἱστορίας  
 ἔσχε μάθησιν . . .  
 ἀλλ' ἀθανάτου καθορῶν φύσεως  
 κόσμον ἀγήρω, πῇ τε συνέστη  
 καὶ θεῇ καὶ ὄπῳ.

Here *ἱστορία* bears its earliest sense of "research," or "search after truth." Cp. its use in the opening words of the history of Herodotus.

Erinyes, the ministers of justice, will find him out.”<sup>1</sup> The poetic form under which the thought is here expressed is adapted to a prevalent sentiment, which long lingered, that man might indeed overstep the limits of existence and violate nature’s order, but not with impunity. The poets contained signal examples of the penalties inflicted on misguided mortals who had raised the dead or otherwise encroached upon the prerogatives of the gods. But by the middle of the fifth century B.C. the general conception of law in the physical world was firmly established in the mind of Greek thinkers. Even the more obscure phenomena of disease were brought within the rule. Hippocrates writing about a malady which was common among the Scythians and was thought to be preternatural says: “As for me I think that these maladies are divine like all others, but that none is more divine or more human than another. Each has its natural principle and none exists without its natural cause.”<sup>2</sup>

Again, the Greeks set themselves to discover a rational basis for conduct. Rigorously

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *de Exilio* 11, “Ἡλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα, φησὶν ὁ Ἡράκλειτος· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἑρινύες μιν δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν.

<sup>2</sup> Hippocr. *περὶ ἀέρων, ὑδάτων, τόπων*, ch. 22.



they brought their actions to the test of reason, and that not only by the mouth of philosophers, but through their poets, historians, and orators. Thinking and doing—clear thought and noble action—did not stand opposed to the Greek mind. The antithesis rather marks a period when the Hellenic spirit was past its prime, and had taken a one-sided bent. The Athenians of the Periclean age—in whom we must recognise the purest embodiment of Hellenism—had in truth the peculiar power, which Thucydides claims for them, of thinking before they acted and of acting also. In the mouth of Pericles are placed the words: “Debate, we hold, does not mar action; the mischief is rather setting to work without being first enlightened.”<sup>1</sup> And among the ideas common to Thucydides and Demosthenes this is one:—that reason is a formative and conquering power; that a strong and clear intelligence can prevail over outward circumstances, and can shape events; that victory is assured to those who see things as they are and shun illusion, and who at the same time summon to the aid of thought a sustained and courageous energy. In the divorce between thought and deed, between speech and action,

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. ii. 40.

Demosthenes truly saw the flaw that was destined fatally to impair Greek conduct and character. In the best times Greek thought did not spend itself in barren effort. Wisdom and heroism, elsewhere found apart, were combined by the Greeks, even as Pallas, goddess of war, was goddess also of counsel.

Thought had become fully conscious of itself in Greece some time before it found the necessary vehicle of expression in prose. It was not till the sixth century B.C. that writing, so long known in the East but scarcely emancipated from religion, was widely used in Greece. Under this new influence prose literature had its first beginnings. Prose, like poetry, was at first a secret in the possession of a few,—an art confined to a close guild of craftsmen. In the joy of discovery men played with the new weapon, tested its unknown powers, and saw no limit to its wonder-working capacities. It was a critical and decisive moment for literature. Of those who professed the new art some devoted themselves to a minute cult of form, treating language not as the willing servant of thought but as an independent and sovereign power. For an instant it seemed doubtful whether educated taste, following in the steps of Gorgias

and his school, would abandon itself to phrase-making and poetic ornament; whether literary prose starting on a wrong course might worship form and pursue beauty at the expense of truth, and seek to dazzle by means of false oppositions and subtleties. Over subtlety was the vice to which the Greek intellect was most inclined. Thought and the expression of thought were always menaced by the love of formal antithesis and of fine-drawn distinctions,—“*Graecorum ille morbus*” as it is called by Seneca: and a deadly disease it proved, for it was in the sterile controversies of Alexandrian critics and finally in the hair-splitting of Byzantine theologians that the stream of Greek literature ran dry. But for the present and even after the Greeks had ceased to produce their best, they resisted the dangerous fascination. An unerring perception told them that the beautiful must also be the true, and recalled them back into the way. As in conduct they insisted on an energy which was rational, so in art and in literature they required of beauty that it too should be, before all things, rational.

As a luminous instance of this I may remind you of their oratory. The Athenians themselves knew the strange magic which gracious speech

exercised over them. A people of artists, who listened to beautiful language as to music, who hissed a mispronunciation, who loved debate as they did a spectacle,—they were aware of their own susceptibilities, and resolved beforehand to be proof against the enchantment. In the presence of a trained speaker their attitude was one of vigilant incredulity. To guard against surprises, to detect sophistries, became an intellectual luxury ; and the unimpassioned calm of the normal Attic peroration,—the coldness, as moderns might say, the apparent anti-climax,—is in some sort a homage that the orator pays to reason : to reason, not to emotion, he addresses the final appeal. To satisfy so exacting an audience no preparatory pains could be too great. The idea now occurred that speech as an instrument of persuasion might be subjected to analysis, that its theory might be unfolded, its practice illustrated, and that men might be taught to be eloquent. It was a new and fruitful idea ; for though language as an instrument of thought, language on its scientific and grammatical side, had been subjected to acute analysis in India, yet language as the instrument of persuasion, shaped and moulded into forms that appealed alike to intellect and feeling,

and answered the demands both of reason and beauty,—from this point of view language had not hitherto been treated. Such a union of the artistic and scientific spirit was the work of Greece.

The language of Greek authors owes its beauty in no slight measure to their directness of vision. They see the object they mean to describe, they do not recall it through the medium of books from literary reminiscence. The sharp outlines of the thought stand visibly before the mind. Even the prose writers have the poetic gift of taking common words and making them seem as if they were fresh minted, with edges unworn and their superscription still plain. It was their good fortune to use a language whose first freshness was not yet faded ; yet it needed also finished art to preserve unimpaired the primitive energy of words, and to impart a kind of distinction to what was familiar. We speak of the happy ease and grace with which the Greeks wrote, but they themselves thought of their own aptitude more as the result of trained skill than of instinct. It is remarkable how the word *σοφία*, “wisdom,” “skill,” is selected by them to denote the poetic gift in contexts where we should be disposed to speak of inspiration. Pindar, who more than any other

poet insists on the need of inborn faculty, also exalts to the utmost the influence of art. His poetry is a subtle science, which obeys laws of its own, fixed rules (τεθμολί), transmitted by the masters of the craft, by which the structure of the rhythm and the handling of the theme are regulated. His flights of imagination are obedient to this skilled guidance. So too in each kind of literary composition invented by the Greeks there are certain controlling traditions, which even genius cannot escape;—or rather which it would not escape even if it could, for it is within the domain of law—*cui servire regnare est*—that genius exercises its sway. The way to originality was felt to lie through a certain self-suppression, which moderns might think was a hampering of free activity. The prose writers as well as the poets subject themselves to the rules of a conscious art, and the perfection of that art is shown in an absence of exaggeration, a delicate spirit of choice, an unobtrusive propriety of diction. The tone is not forced. The effects are produced with the utmost economy of material and are exactly adequate to the occasion. It is as if they acted on the maxim, *Le secret d'ennuyer est de tout dire*. Owing to the very wealth of right words simplicity

becomes possible, and the artist is not betrayed. Repose and power are equally combined, and the distinctive quality of the whole composition is revealed rather in the total impression than in isolated felicities of phrase.

In the domain of eloquence the union of the artistic spirit with technical skill was an idea slowly realised. It so happens that Greek oratory, unlike Roman, can be followed step by step through a continuous development. Cicero stands out the one clear figure among the shadowy forms of Roman orators,—a roll of names once famous, now known either through the barest fragments or through the distant haze of literary criticism. Demosthenes, isolated as he is in his moral grandeur, is yet, as concerns his style, the orderly birth of his age and of his country. He can be understood only in relation to his predecessors ; his place in a series is well defined. But of that series he is also the sum and the completion. The matured civic eloquence was late in appearing, and was comprised within a brief period, between the years 354 and 324 B.C. Coincident with the last struggle for independence, and thence drawing its inspiration, it seemed to spring in a moment into life and as suddenly to



become extinct. But it had, in fact, passed through the preparatory discipline both of the schools and of the law-courts. There it had learnt its pliancy of idiom, its majestic and harmonious phrase, its skilled arrangement of the thoughts, its militant energy. Its forces all stood ready to respond to a great enthusiasm. A double tendency had declared itself in Attic oratory from the outset. Side by side had grown up the scientific and the artistic type. But hitherto there had been no complete fusion. In Demosthenes the two types are combined. The most business-like of orators, he is also the most artistic. Admitting nothing that is not strictly pertinent, disdaining ornament for its own sake, he counts no detail of workmanship unimportant. Practical reason is the groundwork of his speeches, but it is reason alive with passion. The thought, while irresistible in logic, is charged with emotion. Never has there been such a union of force and living fire with literary finish and rhythmical perfection. He passes beyond the particular occasion and the purpose of the moment, and rising above the wrangling of rival politicians extracts from contemporaneous events political truths which human nature ratifies in every age. Few indeed

are the orators of modern times whose speeches live as literature ; like singers their day is brief, and when their voice is no longer heard they are forgotten. Demosthenes survives and is still a storehouse of political wisdom and a model of civic eloquence. The reason is that to the gifts of the statesman and the orator he added that instinct of the Hellenic mind which craves durable expression even for its passing utterances, and stamps all its creations with the seal of art. What he had to say he so said as to make it of universal acceptance.

Again, in history, the Greeks were the first who combined science and art, reason and imagination. India, till it came in contact with Greece, had next to no chronology. Fable and legend occupied the field, and in place of history there were epics and dramas. China, on the other hand, knew facts and dates enough, and drew up its records with painstaking exactness. The letter and the written word became with them a cult in which government and religion were merged, so that an emperor who meditated a political revolution saw no expedient so good as to burn the books. Chinese history reflects in a manner Chinese civilisation. Their civilisation, we are told,

is founded upon reason ; but if so, it is a servile and prosaic reason,—it is reason divorced from beauty and from freedom. Their history is not far different ; it is careful, encyclopaedic, and unreadable.

Greece discovered another kind of history, in which reason and beauty were reconciled—one which the Romans borrowed, and which has served as a pattern to modern times. Thucydides, as one who has observed the shaping of events and who has seized their meaning, sets himself to disengage the causes which produce them, and traces them back to their hidden source in character. The shadow of semi-fatalism which rested over the history of Herodotus is removed. History is no longer the result of the vengeance or jealousy of superhuman powers ; it becomes the expression of human intelligence, one of the modes in which reason works out its free activity. It is by this method that Thucydides is “philosophic,” and almost in the sense in which Aristotle declares poetry to be “more philosophic than history.” Thucydides is philosophic, not as a speculative philosopher who has a system to expound, but as one who looks beyond the particular phenomena with which he is dealing, and discerns the universal type in and through the individual.

His history has also poetic affinities. The speakers tell their own tale ; the historian maintains an austere reserve ; the events arrange themselves in dramatic sequence and lead up to a tragic catastrophe. Unimaginative history may contain much useful material, but it is not history regarded as literature. Doubtless the inroad of poetry was in ancient times a standing danger to history, and later Greek history was invaded, and with ruinous results, by poetical and rhetorical fiction. Yet history, however much it may approach to science, by a necessity of its nature falls short of science ; it is on the borderland between science and poetry. Thucydides with his sceptical intellect and his stern resolve not to quit the ground of solid fact, cannot divest himself of the imaginative genius of his race. His history is dramatic, and in a two-fold way. First through the speeches, which, though they were never delivered as they stand, sum up the thoughts of the representative actors on each occasion. If they do not place before us vivid portraits of the individual speakers, they express the larger lineaments of Spartans or Athenians ; they are a mirror of national character revealing itself at significant moments. They are never ornamental accessories, but are

in intimate relation with the facts, on which they form a lucid commentary, and which through them become generalised truths. The reflections that occur in this the strictly imaginative portion of the work, the view of the situation here unfolded, the analysis of the motives that go to make events,—this it is which mainly gives to the history of Thucydides its comprehensive wisdom. Again, he is dramatic in his presentment of facts. Voltaire wished that a history might be written, in which, as in a piece put upon the stage, there should be a dramatic situation, the unfolding of a story,—the tying of a knot, and the *dénouement*. Such a history Thucydides has written. The period of the Peloponnesian war had a well-defined unity of its own. A single great action was here evolved. The facts were full of tragic meaning ; all that was required to bring out their inherent grandeur and pathos was that they should be skilfully ordered. “Thucydides,” says Professor Jebb,<sup>1</sup> “is dramatic, for instance, when he places the Melian dialogue immediately before the Sicilian expedition. The simple juxtaposition of insolence and ruin is more effective than comment.” And further, the Peloponnesian war presents “a definite

<sup>1</sup> *Hellenica*, p. 318.

moment at which the cardinal situation is reversed. . . . That moment is the Sicilian expedition. The supreme test of 'dramatic' quality in a history of the Peloponnesian war must be the power with which the historian has marked the significance of the Sicilian expedition as the tragic 'revolution,' the climax of pity and terror, the decisive reversal. . . . Here, at the point in his story which supplies the crucial test, Thucydides shows that he possesses true dramatic power. By the direct presentment of the facts, not by reflections upon them, he makes us feel all that is tragic in the Sicilian disaster itself, and also all that it means in relation to the larger tragedy of the war."

The application of a clear and fearless intellect to every domain of life was, then, one of the services rendered by Greece to the world. It was connected with the awakening of the lay spirit. In the East the priests had generally held the keys of knowledge. Even writing tended to be a hieratic secret. Literature and science were branches of theology, and their study belonged to the priestly office. Thus, in India the Brahmins had always hidden from the people the sources whence their knowledge was derived. They watched, indeed, the course of discovery, and

turned it to account, but represented each new discovery as part of a primitive revelation. Still more marked in Egypt was the impress left by the priesthood on all the arts and sciences. In Greece, from the earliest time, the sacerdotal influence is slight. Not that there were no priests, but the priests never became a corporation, still less a caste. Even women might hold the priestly office,—an office sometimes conferred by popular election. Theano in the *Iliad* (vi. 300) is appointed by the Trojans to be priestess of Athene. Vows of celibacy were not a necessary condition for the office; personal beauty was sometimes made essential. From the first sight that we catch of the priests in Homer, they are attached to certain local worships, and do not quit the temple. They do not accompany the army to war. Even in time of peace, the heroes themselves offer the sacrifices which precede the family meal. The priest and the diviner are generally lightly accounted in Homer, and the minstrel or singer is held in higher honour. Nor did the priests penetrate into private life or teach religion. They were not theologians, but sacristans and liturgical functionaries. Not they, but the poets became the educators of youth.



Together with intellectual enfranchisement Greece found also political freedom. In the East, society had fluctuated between despotism and anarchy ; if it did not fall under one or other of these forces, it was only, as with the Jews, saved by means of a theocracy. Now, in Greece, though despotisms sprang up, they were never quite of the Eastern type—a single master and a people of slaves ; and, moreover, they were quickly followed by reactions. Being, in truth, the negation of all Greek ideas, they were never accepted save after a struggle, and the tyrant knew the insecure tenure of his power. From the outset we see that tyrannies will find no congenial soil in Greece. The king, in Homeric times, is far from being an Asiatic monarch. The chief points of difference are indicated by Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> where he tells us that heroic royalty was established by the free consent of the governed, and the functions attaching to it were determinate ; the king was a general and a judge, and presided at sacrificial rites. Willing subjects and limited prerogatives,—here we have Western ideas. Heroic royalty has in it the germ of future republics ; for the Greek city springs from the independent union

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. *Pol.* iii. 14. 1285 b 4.

of independent wills, it is a self-governing community regulated by law and not by force. One of the recorded sayings of Heraclitus runs thus: "The people should fight for the law as for the city rampart."<sup>1</sup> The Spartan Demaratus thus describes his countrymen to the Great King: "Though free, they are not wholly free. The law for them is a supreme master" (ἔπεστι γάρ σφι δεσπότης νόμος).<sup>2</sup> And the Athenian Aeschylus puts into the mouth of the Eumenides the words, "Praise neither the life of anarchy nor the life of despotism."<sup>3</sup> "Unblest freedom from restraint" (to use again the phrase of Aeschylus) was not the Greek conception of a freeman; and those tribes, those ἔθνη, who had no centres of political life, no settled law and usage, even if of Greek blood, hardly counted as forming part of the Greek brotherhood. They were only a grade above wandering hordes. But still more foreign to Greek sentiment were the great military monarchies which from time to time overshadowed Greek civilisation. To such a monarchy Greece at length succumbed. And the whole force of Demosthenes' genius is spent on marking the

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laert. ix. 2, μάχεσθαι χρή τὸν δῆμον ὑπὲρ τοῦ νόμου ὅπως ὑπὲρ τείχεος.

<sup>2</sup> Herod. vii. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 526.

contrast between the subjects of such a state and the free citizens of Greece. He is the interpreter of Hellenism as against barbarism. In the name of free institutions he appeals to the sense of honour and of duty, to human dignity, to moral responsibility, to enlightened patriotism—appeals, all of them unmeaning to men who were part of a mere machine, fitted into an iron framework, who knew only of obedience to a master, and for whom the past had no inspiring memories.

The East did not attempt to reconcile the claims of the State and the individual. The pliant genius of Greece first made the effort. In Greece first the idea of the public good, of the free devotion of the citizen to the State, of government in the interests of the governed, of the rights of the individual, took shape. The problem of the relation between the State and the individual was, indeed, very imperfectly solved in Greece. The demands, for instance, of the State were pitched too high, and implied a virtue almost heroic in its members. Even in Athens, where individual liberty was most regarded, certain urgent public needs were supplied mainly by the precarious method of private generosity instead of by State organisation. But though the Greeks may not have

solved the political problem, they saw that there was a problem to solve, and set about it rationally ; and they were the first to do so. They were gifted with a power, peculiarly Western, of delicate adjustment, of combining principles apparently opposite, of harmonising conflicting claims ; they possessed a sense of measure, a flexibility, a faculty of compromise, opposed to the fatal simplicity with which Eastern politics had been stricken. Not tyranny, not anarchy, satisfied the Greek, but ordered liberty.

Passing now to another side of the Greek genius, their love of Art, let us go back for a few minutes to that early time of which Homer and Herodotus have left us a picture. By land and by sea there came to Hellas the marvels of the East. Golgos, Idalia, Curium, Larnaka, and Nimroud have yielded to us their treasures, and all tell the same story—the story of the splendour of the East and the wonder of the West. The picture of Herodotus is still fresh : the Phœnician trader—the carrier of the ancient world—voyaging in his black ship, freighting his vessel with the wares of Egypt and Assyria ; the landing on the Argive coast ; the five days' fair ; the throng of eager Hellenes. And those very wares for which they

bartered are scattered now throughout the museums of Europe ; fantastic carved shells, bronze idols, silver bowls graven with zones of tigers and with hybrid monsters—winged sphinxes, chimaeras, human-headed birds—things born of an unbridled Eastern imagination, and wrought with prolific industry in the valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates. Egyptian art, like Egyptian thought, was, we know, heavy with the incubus of an all-powerful priesthood ; it was an elaborate cult of the dead, haunted, half-scared with the shadows of the underworld. It was the art of a people who called their houses “hostelries” (*καταλύσεις*), places of temporary sojourn, while their tombs they called the “eternal homes.”<sup>1</sup> Among their gods were dog-headed apes, whose animal forms, born of a totemism never wholly extinct, were to later days hybrid symbols, incarnate dogmas ; their proportions were conventional, their individuality floating and confused, and their virtue lay rather in size than in symmetry. Assyrian art, on the other hand, was the outcome, and bore the impress, of a despotism not religious but secular. The king was to the Euphrates what the priest was to the Nile. With laborious detail the Assyrian

<sup>1</sup> Diodor. Sic. i. 51.

artist inscribes upon the palace walls the story of the monarch's prowess, of his fierce license, of his inhuman courage, of the abject multitude that abase themselves before him. Six thousand square metres are not enough for the tedious iteration. Even the kings are types, not individuals; the artist works by precept, almost by prescription; he is but the lifeless mouthpiece of a system, a servile chronicler, now rising to bombast, now sinking to garrulity.

All this we know in the light of a mature art-criticism; but how is the Greek to fare when some thirty centuries ago he looks on this world of fantastic wonder with child-like eyes? We might tremble for the issue did we not know the sequel. It is as though he said to himself,—“I will borrow from this artist of the East his technical skill; I will learn of him his sleight of hand; he shall teach me to carve and to grave, to inlay with metal and to fashion with clay.” That he did so learn, literature and art alike tell us. The silver bowl which Achilles gave as a prize at the funeral of Patroclus was made by Sidonian artists, and brought by Phoenicians over the sea; Helen's silver work-basket, which ran on wheels, was fashioned in Egyptian Thebes. But against the

spirit of the East the spirit of the Hellene revolted. To the Egyptian priest he appears to say : " I am a layman ; I worship in the sunshine a god who is both human and divine, who is to me a familiar presence, who dwells with men, not remote and inaccessible, not incarnate in the form of a beast. I pray to him with upright form and uplifted hands, as man to man." And to the Assyrian : " I am a freeman, the slave of no despot ; I reject your splendour for the one, your cowering misery for the many. Your monarch is a tyrant, your boasted magnificence is barbarism." And to both he said as an artist : " Your art is monotonous and lifeless, because it is priest and tyrant ridden, because the individual artist is nothing, the precept he inculcates everything. Your history, that should live and breathe upon your sculptured walls, is a bare chronicle. Your gods are not persons but attributes : you tolerate the ugly for the sake of dogma. You are a nation of symbols, of abstractions, of fantastic speculation. In religion as in art, at one moment licentious, at another you are rigidly didactic. Because you disallow reason you are forced to be chimerical."

This profession of faith was not put into words but we read it in Greek history. The drift of



things was not perceived in a day. For a time Greece yielded in part to the dazzling temptation ; to the end her handicraftsmen, as opposed to her true artists, adopted a system of ornamentation from the East. Hundreds of vases of all periods, embodying some chance Oriental conception, rise up to witness to the fact. A Pegasus, a Chimaera, a Sphinx, a Siren, survive to tell the story of Oriental influence. But such instances are comparatively few and scattered. They remain, it has been well said, as foreign words borrowed into a language, but never wholly naturalised. The seventh and the sixth century B.C. witnessed the struggle in which Greece came out victorious. We see the victory even in the rude naturalism of the Heracles of Selinus ; the grinning Medusa has already lost something of her Oriental formalism. As in matters intellectual Greece loosed her bands, and with happy and gracious flexibility entered on untried courses, so in art, too, there was emancipation. No longer is it sign upon sign and symbol upon symbol. The early Greeks look in wonder at their own plastic or sculptured creations, and fancy them to be things of life. "In their hearts," says Homer of the golden handmaids of Hephaestus, "they have understanding, they have also voice

and strength, and from the immortal gods they have skill in handicraft.”<sup>1</sup> No longer are the arms welded to the sides, the eyelids fastened over the eyeballs, and the whole form fixed immovably to a chair. The images of Daedalus, who was the mythical author of this change, are said to have been tied by chains, lest they should “walk off like runaway slaves.”<sup>2</sup>

This brief sketch indicates, I think, the sense in which Greek art unites in itself the qualities which are most distinctive of the Greek genius,—the love of knowledge, the love of rational beauty, the love of freedom. In their first contact with the East—with Egypt and Assyria—during the period known as the Graeco-Phoenician period of art, the Greeks had a trying ordeal to pass through. They came out of it, as we have seen, in a characteristic fashion.

1. Their political instinct was alien to Assyrian despotism.

2. Their lay instinct rose up against Egyptian priestcraft.

3. Their instinct for beauty and reason combined rejected in both arts—in Assyrian and Egyptian alike—what was monstrous and lifeless.

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* xviii. 419-20.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Meno* 159 D.

4. Their instinct for knowledge, their curiosity, their cosmopolitanism, led them to adopt the foreign *technique*, and to absorb all that was fruitful in the foreigners' ideas. They borrowed from every source, but all that they borrowed they made their own. The Phoenicians, it has been said, taught the Greeks writing, but it was the Greeks who wrote. In every department the principle holds good. They stamped their genius upon each imported product, which was to them but the raw material of their art.

It was not till after the Persian invasion that Greece, which had now and again shown signs of backsliding, severed itself decisively from the East. The barbarian, as if to make place for the new order, had in his reckless havoc swept away the artistic landmarks of the old. The dwelling place of the earth-born Erechtheus lay in ruins. The ancient temple of Athene Polias was dismantled. Such cults as these, local, narrow, hieratic, could no longer satisfy the aspirations of the victorious people. They needed a worship that should do more than glorify their god, one that should give utterance to themselves. It became with them a national passion to find artistic expression for their sense of deliverance, to write for all time

upon Pentelic marble the story of the triumph of light over darkness, of West over East. The triumph had been Pan-Hellenic, their worship henceforth must be Pan-Olympian. In the new temple of Athene Polias, with her new title of Parthenos, this story took shape. No stone of the fabric but tells the tale. In the eastern pediment is sculptured the first act of the drama, the first note of the people's triumph, the birth of the goddess as virgin, her kinship as Olympian. At the dawn the horses of Helios are uprising, and the chariot of Selene, the moon-goddess, sinks into the sea; for Athene is born, the Olympian, and the shadows melt from before her. She is born not of the earth but of the very brain of Zeus, with all the cosmic circumstance of sea and land and sun and moon. In the western pediment the second act is rehearsed, the rivalry of Athene and Poseidon,—which of these two with the better gift shall dower the land. Poseidon brings his goodly horses and the sea's dominion, but Athene's gift is preferred, the sea-green olive, self-renewing, self-defended. In the sculptured metopes that adorn the Doric frieze the contrast, nay, the conflict is more clearly expressed. The Lapith ancestor of many a noble Athenian, the law-abiding Greek,

contends with the monstrous Centaur, the man-horse, the type of barbarian license in the Gigantomachia. The whole phalanx of the Olympians is set in battle array against the earth-born and rebel giants. The heroes of Athens prevail here over the lawless womenfolk of the Amazons, there over the beleaguered city of half Oriental Troy. The achievement of mythical ancestors is invested with new meaning, and takes fresh lustre from the late victory over Persia. And if pediment and metope tell of the remote past, the splendour of the present is unfolded in the frieze of the cella. The body-politic of Athens in its new-found triumph and freedom is here enrolled in sculptured procession,—young men, princely and proud, “slaves of no man, servants of none”; maidens bearing aloft the sacred vessels, without sign of shame upon their brows. Here we have no sin-laden devotees making expiation but godlike men worshipping their human gods, gods who sit in easy fellowship awaiting the homage of those who are almost peers. The spirit of the worshippers reflects the spirit of the goddess; they are reasonable, fearless, temperate.

Yet in this new outburst of life, this self-conscious expression of freedom, the past is not

lightly set aside. Though in the centre of the western pediment the two Olympians contend to do the city honour, it is the ancient heroes and gods of the land who adjudge the strife. Cecrops is still there with his serpent tail and his faithful daughter, and in the pediment angle recline the two local river-gods. Though a splendid image of gold and ivory was upreared to Athene Polias in her new aspect of Parthenos, the ancient heaven-descended image was not forgotten. Another Erechtheum was raised to be the home of venerable cults ; within its precincts were sheltered the sacred serpent, the olive-tree, the trident mark, the ancient leaf-covered Hermes, the altars of half-forgotten priest-kings, the Butadae. Now, for a moment at least, Athens at this happy pause in her career unites a reverend conservatism with her forward and inquiring temper. Art, science, religion, have balanced their several claims. Science stays her encroachments, and is not wise over-much.

Such, briefly, is our debt to Greece. And when we speak of Greece we think first of Athens. To Greece herself Athens seemed to offer a perpetual *πανήγυρις*,<sup>1</sup> a feast of language and of thought, to which all were welcome who shared in the spirit

<sup>1</sup> Isocr. *Panegy.* § 46.

of the Hellenic brotherhood. To citizens and to strangers by means of epic recitations and dramatic spectacles, she presented an idealised image of life itself. She was the home of new ideas, the mother-city from which poetry, eloquence, and philosophy spread to distant lands. While the chief dialects of Greece survive, each not as a mere dialect but as the language of literature,—a thing unknown in the history of any other people,—the Attic idiom, in which the characteristic elements of other dialects met and were blended, has become to us, as it did to the ancients, the very type of Hellenic speech. Athens was not only the “capital of Greece,”<sup>1</sup> the “school of Greece”;<sup>2</sup> it deserves the name applied to it in an epitaph on Euripides: “his country is Athens, *Greece of Greece*.”<sup>3</sup> The rays of the Greek genius here found a centre and a focus.

To Greece, then, we owe the love of Science, the love of Art, the love of Freedom: not Science alone, Art alone, or Freedom alone, but these vitally correlated with one another and brought into organic union. And in this union we recognise the

<sup>1</sup> Isocr. *Antid.* § 299 ἀστυ τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

<sup>2</sup> Thucyd. ii. 41 τῆς Ἑλλάδος παλδενσιν.

<sup>3</sup> *Anth. Pal.* vii. 45 πατρίς δ' Ἑλλάδος Ἑλλάς Ἀθῆναι.

distinctive features of the West. The Greek genius is the European genius in its first and brightest bloom. From a vivifying contact with the Greek spirit Europe derived that new and mighty impulse which we call Progress. Strange it is to think that these Greeks, like the other members of the Indo-European family, probably had their cradle in the East ; that behind Greek civilisation, Greek language, Greek mythology, there is that Eastern background to which the comparative sciences seem to point. But it is no more than a background. In spite of all resemblances, in spite of common customs, common words, common syntax, common gods, the spirit of the Greeks and of their Eastern kinsmen—the spirit of their civilisation, art, language, and mythology—remains essentially distinct. The Greeks, when first they meet us in history, fancy themselves to have been born on the soil ; they have no memory of their Asiatic origin. They were blest with the faculty of *forgetting*—one of the happiest gifts a nation can possess. And their own sense of difference and distinction was at bottom true. The Greek genius, with its potent originality, had transformed, if not effaced, the Eastern lineaments. The Greek victories over the East at Marathon and Salamis



were but the earnest of a victory that had been long preparing for the Western world. Much yet remained to be done by Rome, and much by the Teutonic nations, for Greece left many blots and flaws in her political and social system. But the broad lines had been already traced, along which there was to be forward movement.

From Greece came that first mighty impulse, whose far-off workings are felt by us to-day, and which has brought it about that progress has been accepted as the law and goal of human endeavour. Greece first took up the task of equipping man with all that fits him for civil life and promotes his secular wellbeing ; of unfolding and expanding every inborn faculty and energy, bodily and mental ; of striving restlessly after the perfection of the whole, and finding in this effort after an unattainable ideal that by which man becomes like to the gods. The life of the Hellenes, like that of their Epic hero Achilles, was brief and brilliant. But they have been endowed with the gift of renewing their youth. Renan, speaking of the nations that are fitted to play a part in universal history, says "that they must die first that the world may live through them ;" that "a people must choose between the prolonged life, the

tranquil and obscure destiny of one who lives for himself, and the troubled, stormy career of one who lives for humanity. The nation which revolves within its breast social and religious problems is always weak politically. Thus it was with the Jews, who in order to make the religious conquest of the world must needs disappear as a nation.”<sup>1</sup> “They lost a material city, they opened the reign of the spiritual Jerusalem.” So too it was with Greece. As a people she ceased to be. When her freedom was overthrown at Chaeronea, the page of her history was to all appearance closed. Yet from that moment she was to enter on a larger life and on universal empire. Already, during the last days of her independence it had been possible to speak of a new Hellenism, which rested not on ties of blood but on spiritual kinship. This presentiment of Isocrates was marvellously realised. As Alexander passed conquering through Asia, he restored to the East, as garnered grain, that Greek civilisation whose seeds had long ago been received from the East. Each conqueror in turn, the Macedonian and the Roman, bowed before conquered Greece and learnt lessons at her feet. To the modern world too Greece has been

<sup>1</sup> *Conférences d'Angleterre*, p. 103.

the great civiliser, the oecumenical teacher, the disturber and regenerator of slumbering societies. She is the source of most of the quickening ideas which re-make nations and renovate literature and art. If we reckon up our secular possessions, the wealth and heritage of the past, the larger share may be traced back to Greece. One half of life she has made her domain,—all, or well-nigh all, that belongs to the present order of things and to the visible world.

“We are all Greeks,” says Shelley; “our laws, our literature, our religion, our art, have their roots in Greece.” This is somewhat overstated: neither our laws, nor our religion are derived from Greece. Our religion has come to us from the East, though it too has been touched and breathed upon by the Western spirit. Greek polytheism was doomed to sterility, on the side both of speculation and of conduct. Though the poets of Greece, like the Hebrew prophets, tried to ennoble the popular religion; though Pindar, Aeschylus, and Sophocles, by a purifying and reflective process, imported into polytheism lofty religious conceptions and a grave ideal of conduct, yet polytheism could not bear the strain. It could not receive within it the new content. The philosophers were more ruthless

and clear-sighted than the poets. From the beginning, philosophy made war on polytheism ; it aimed not at reform, but at destruction.

The tide of conquest was rolled back, and our religion has come to us from the East,—but from an East how different from that out of which Greece emerged, or from that which she vanquished at Salamis ! In those earlier ages, the victory of the East over Greece would have been the triumph of nature over man, of necessity over moral freedom, of a caste system or of despotism over free organisation and intelligence, of stagnation over progress, of symbolism over beauty, of the arid plain over the mountain and the sea. The actual victory of East over West, which took place at the triumph of Christianity, had in it no such sinister meaning. Greece had already won freedom in all its branches—freedom for society, freedom for the individual, freedom for thought. She had written her spirit in books and on tables of stone, which time has spared for our reading, and which record the supremacy of mind over sense, of spirit over matter. She had shown how the love of beauty might be united with the love of truth, art with science, how reason might be made imaginative. She had given living history for dry chronicle,

oratory for rhetoric, sober imagination for Eastern phantasy. This imperishable legacy she left to mankind. She could now afford to give place to an Eastern religion. Henceforth it is in the confluence of the Hellenic stream of thought with the waters that flow from Hebrew sources that the main direction of the world's progress is to be sought. The two tendencies summed up in the words Hebraism and Hellenism are often regarded as opposing and irreconcilable forces ; and, indeed, it is only in a few rarely gifted individuals that these principles have been perfectly harmonised. Yet harmonised they can and must be. How to do so is one of the problems of modern civilisation ;—how we are to unite the dominant Hebrew idea of a divine law of righteousness and of a supreme spiritual faculty with the Hellenic conception of human energies, manifold and expansive, each of which claims for itself unimpeded play ; how life may gain unity without incurring the reproach of onesidedness ; how, in a word, Religion may be combined with Culture.

## THE GREEK IDEA OF THE STATE

THE prevailing conception of the State in our own day is that of a vast mechanism for controlling and regulating the action of Society. It is a whole made up of government departments, an army of officials, headed by the policeman and the tax-collector, all set in motion by a supreme Legislature. To some minds it presents itself as a hostile force, thwarting our natural impulses, and imposing checks upon individual freedom. Yet it cannot be dispensed with altogether, for without it Society would go to pieces. None the less it is an evil. Its action must be restricted to the utmost,—some would say limited to the protection of life and property and to ensuring the fulfilment of legal engagements. For these purposes it must be armed with the authority of the nation. Individuals surrender something, but in return get more than they give up. Beyond this

point the well-intentioned but clumsy efforts of the State to make men good and to make them wise fare no better than those of the individual busybody who in season and out of season concerns himself with his neighbour's welfare, and reforms him against his will. As for the higher mental faculties they are withered and paralysed under the shadow of State patronage. According to this view the State is always meddling, always encroaching ; it is trying to do everybody's work and does it all badly. Others, still regarding the State as a great machinery, hold that the machinery is only half utilised ; that much beneficent action is arrested simply because the State refrains from touching the proper springs. Or, it is said that the works are antiquated, and that State action will only be effectual when the machinery of State is renewed. In either case stress is laid on the ubiquitous and penetrating influence of the State, on the vast forces at its disposal, greater than any individuals or association of individuals can ever wield. The State in this view ought to undertake ampler duties, nothing less than the general task of social regeneration. To this end it must reorganise the whole industrial and economic system, and marshal men in new

groups and combinations, assigning to each its special function. It will minister to the souls as well as to the bodies of its citizens. By salutary restrictions it will withdraw the facilities for vice, and by raising the standard of material prosperity it will remove many existing temptations.

These are two extreme views between which there are various tenable positions. They are held by thinkers, they are in the minds of ordinary men. But that which is common to all such views is the conception of the State as distinct from Society, taking upon itself the business of Society, acting on its behalf, with more or less success or bungling as the case may be. The State is a thing external to the individual citizen, administering his affairs, claiming his obedience, prescribing certain acts, forbidding others. Though the citizen himself, under a system of popular institutions, is the ultimate source of the authority of the State, yet in large States he hardly recognises as his own the delegated rule. He has appointed officials to act for him in all the details of government. They hold, as it were, the seals of State. The sovereign people abdicates office and only at intervals resumes the reins of power, and reminds itself of its rights by signing voting



papers. At shorter intervals it may perhaps issue certain intermediate orders, direct mandates to its representatives, whom it is apt to relieve of the task of thinking for themselves. But all the hard work, the everyday business of administration, it leaves to be done by officials,—either by permanent officials, the silent men who do not talk but work, or by elective Boards, much of whose work consists in talking. The private citizen, who holds no official position, almost forgets except at election times that he has a share in governing as well as in being governed. The call that occasionally comes to him in this country to serve as a juror is an unwelcome reminder that he is himself a vital part of the organisation of government.

The severance of the ordinary citizen from the active business of the State, as distinct from the function of talking or voting, is rendered almost necessary by the dimensions to which the modern State has grown. From the City of the ancient world it has expanded into the Nation ; it numbers its millions where in old days there were thousands, men who are connected together by links and relations of ever-increasing complexity. In some countries the detachment I speak of is less complete than in others ; for local government, when

based on rational principles, can do something towards restoring the unity of the body corporate. But to the great majority of citizens the State is an inherited system or organisation, an abstraction that is outside themselves ; or else, when it acts in its collective capacity and as an individual, it comes to be identified with the Executive, that is, with the Government of the day : in which case it is to one half of the community no longer even a harmless abstraction, but consists of a band of political opponents, whom the other party are accustomed in their speech, if not in their hearts, to regard as the enemies of the country. The idea of the State suffers grievously from being thought of at the best as a machinery of government, at the worst as a party organisation. With such associations no emotion or living sentiment can gather round it. The cause of Country is one for which men will now, as of old, do great deeds and sacrifice all. The interests of the State seem a thing apart. There is no spell about the word. The State, people say, is well able to take care of itself.

All this forms a striking contrast with the idea which, for a brief and fortunate moment in the history of the world, prevailed in Greece. To the

common consciousness of Greece the State or the City was not an organisation but an organism, no lifeless machine of government, no alien force imposing itself upon the citizen, but a living whole which took up into itself all individual wills ; not impeding spontaneous energies or crushing individual growth, but enriching and completing the individualities which it embraced. It was the individual on his ideal side ; his true and spiritual self ; the glorified expression and embodiment of his noblest aims and faculties ; the higher unity in which he merged his separate or selfish self ; the enduring substance which outlived his transient existence. From it were derived and back into it flowed all the currents of individual life. "The Man *versus* the State" was a phrase unknown ; The Man was complete in the State ; apart from it he was not only incomplete, he had no rational existence. Only through the social organism could each part, by adaptation to the others, develop its inherent powers. To the Greeks Society and the State were one and indivisible. Different constitutions in various degrees approximated to this idea ; only under some form of republic, however, could the full conception be realised, for there only could each citizen be said

to be at once "ruler and ruled" (*ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι*); a member of Society, and at the same time a member of the Government. At Athens a citizen voted and spoke in the assembly and sat on a jury on one and the same principle as that on which he served in the army. It was no mere right or privilege, but a duty which the State claimed from him in virtue of his citizenship. In one case as in the other he might shirk the duty, but if he did so he failed to fulfil his proper function. Nor was it at Athens only that this idea prevailed. In a fragment of Democritus, the philosopher of Abdera, we find it said, that the neglect of public business wins a man a bad name, though he may not be guilty of thieving or dishonesty.<sup>1</sup> But the fact and the idea soon ceased to correspond. In the fourth century B.C. the sense of estrangement between Society and the State had made itself felt, and the individual, absorbed in separate interests, withdrew from the service of the commonwealth. The Greek State in its distinctive form and true idea was then approaching its end. It was one of the fatal signs and warnings of decay. The unity of Greek life could not survive the growth of a conscious individualism.

<sup>1</sup> Democr. *Frag.* 213.

• We sometimes forget how memorable, how original a creation the Greek State was,—hardly less striking in its originality than the creations of Greece in art, philosophy, and literature, or than her discoveries in the region of pure science. We think less of it than it deserves because it had not, and in the nature of things could not have, the same stamp of permanence, of universality, of final achievement, that belongs to those other products of the Greek genius. But let us look for a moment at the place it holds in universal history.

In the pre-Grecian world the State and the Individual had stood apart. There had been despotism and there had been anarchy. Society had oscillated between these two poles, the rule of the one man in a world of slaves, and the license of a multitude who could not be called free because they obeyed only their own caprice. The two principles had confronted one another as irreconcilable opposites. Like any other abstract principle when left to work itself out alone, each of these ideas led to fanaticism. It seemed as if Society must ever consume itself in inward strife or drag out a torpid existence. Greece offered the first solution of the antithesis of Freedom and Necessity in the domain of politics, a

solution far from final, yet an immeasurable advance upon all that had been done before : for it introduced into politics a principle of mediation, of rational compromise, which has ever since been among the most potent instruments of progress.

For the Greek state had in it that which made it akin at once to a natural unity and to a voluntary union. It rested on definite and enduring relations which were above the caprice of the individual ; the citizen entered at birth into the common heritage of race, language, and religion ; he found about him a framework of customs and institutions which he had not made and as little could unmake. On the other hand, he felt no revolt against these fixed conditions of his civic existence. Within the sphere of City life he moved as in his native element. He was aware indeed of newly awakened faculties and of his own independent existence in the community, but unconscious as yet of antagonism as well as difference. Each citizen was vitally one with all the rest ;—one with the social organism and with his whole environment. With the awakening of this conscious life, Reason as a self-determining and organising force had entered into secular society. Reason too had its conflicts ; it worked in the

stormy atmosphere of political debate ; in the blind struggles of parties and factions which almost rent the State in twain. Yet once heard it could not be silenced. In free and fierce discussion it matured its powers ; tyranny and anarchy gave way before it ; and it was the triumph of Greece not only that it produced immortal writers and immortal artists, but that it gave to human society a new starting-point and a new direction. Instead of obedience to a despotic will, or the unending conflict of individual passions, it established Reason as the arbiter and guide of civic life, Reason or λόγος in its twofold supremacy, as Rational Thought and Rational Speech.

This Reason, as the principle which inspired the social organism, was embodied in Law. Law to the Greeks is Reason made articulate, the public conscience of the community finding for itself expression. In its severe impartiality it is free from human prejudice and passion ; it is νοῦς ἄνευ ὀρέξεως,<sup>1</sup> "Reason without desire." It has on the one hand an ἀναγκαστικὴ δύναμις,<sup>2</sup> a compelling power more constraining than a parent's authority. Yet the constraint is a voluntary one,

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* iii. 16. 1287 a 32.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* x. 10. 1180 a 21.

it is the moral compulsion or *ἀνάγκη* which only freemen can impose upon themselves. Hence in Greek literature Law has another side than that of an impersonal authority that claims allegiance. It speaks in two voices, in a voice of stern compulsion and in accents of reasonable persuasion. To each citizen it addresses itself as his own *alter ego*, his best, his higher self. In Plato's *Crito* the Laws are made to present themselves in person to Socrates in prison not only as the guardians of his liberty but as his lifelong friends, his well-wishers, his equals, with whom he had of his own freewill entered into binding compact. Elsewhere<sup>1</sup> Plato puts aside the thought of the Laws as "tyrants and masters who command and threaten, and after writing their decrees on walls go their ways." Rather do they reason with men and seek to win their intelligent consent, and only in the last resort do they threaten pains and penalties. In the same context the exhortation of the laws is compared to that of the poets and of those writers "who in metre or out of metre have recorded their notes for the guidance of life."<sup>2</sup>

In entire accordance too with the sentiment of Greece Plato<sup>3</sup> recognises a region between

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Laws* ix. 859 A.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 858 D.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 822-3.



admonition and positive law over which the law-giver has control. Part of the office of the law-giver<sup>1</sup> was to be a moral teacher, a preacher of righteousness ; to prescribe the acts that ought to be done and also to reveal and to inspire in men the true motives of action ; to create a disposition no less than to enforce outward conformity ; to work into the complex web of national life all the influences that may ennoble and enrich it. To the great lawgivers of the past the Greeks looked back as other nations do to the founders or reformers of their religion. They were the inspired men who had been the salvation of their States. Law as promulgated by them was not a code of prohibitions nor was it limited to the corrective justice of the law courts. Its range was wider than that of morality itself. Institutions, in the eyes of the Greeks, were the creations of Law. Traditions and customs rested on its sanction. Ideals of conduct, types of national character, were moulded by its influence. The inspirations of heroism were traced to it as their source. Law blended with religion, morality, and public opinion, and by its subtle operation

<sup>1</sup> Here and in much of what follows I am under deep obligations to W. L. Newman's *Politics of Aristotle*, vol. i.

subdued society to its will. It was invested with spiritual efficacy and power. The Law of the Greeks was at once the Law and the Prophets of the Hebrews.

It is easy here to see how much that was really due to national history and character, to religion, to the force of circumstances, to the silent impact and pressure of society on the individual, was put down to the direct action of Law or of the lawgiver. And it is equally clear that the conception of Law here indicated was not one on which a great fabric of jurisprudence could be reared. For that we must look elsewhere. But it is a point of view which presents features of unique interest. We have Law not as in Judaism, a system of rigid rules, a bondage to external ordinances, "touch not, taste not, handle not"; not as in Rome a code of abstract rights, resting on a doctrine of legal personality; but Law as the organ and collective voice of freemen and fellow-citizens, more sacred, more binding upon the conscience than any external commands; Law as a divine element immanent in human nature, Reason made animate and pleading with men in accents of emotion. Well might the orators declare that democracy in its true idea was the

reign of Law. And, indeed, Aristotle notes<sup>1</sup> that the worst fault of an extreme or untempered democracy is its lawlessness, that is, the reign of arbitrary will, the negation of Hellenic freedom. When each man does what is good in his own eyes reason is dethroned and passing impulse takes its place. "But this is all wrong; men should not think it slavery to live according to the rule of the constitution, for it is their salvation." The service of the laws, says Plato, is also the service of the gods,—a service in which to obey is nobler than to rule.<sup>2</sup>

The first great advance, then, made by the Greeks in determining the relations of the State and the individual consisted in the voluntary subordination of the individual will to the will of the community. In this act of self-surrender the citizen realised his true self, he became conscious of spiritual freedom. When Demosthenes<sup>3</sup> passionately calls upon the Athenians to "belong to themselves," "to become their own masters," "to assert their freedom," he says not a different thing from Aristotle, but the same thing as when Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* viii. (v.) 9. 1310 a 25 *sqq.*    <sup>2</sup> Plat. *Laws* vi. 762 E.

<sup>3</sup> Dem. *Phil.* i. 7, ἐὰν ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἐθελήσητε γενέσθαι. So *Olynth.* ii. 30.

declares<sup>1</sup> that "no citizen belongs to himself but that all belong to the State." What Demosthenes desires is an emancipation from selfish aims, from flattering counsellors, an assertion of the true and corporate self, as exhibited in an entire devotion to the public good. Absolute self-sacrifice for the interests of the State, personal service for the country, this he meant by freedom. He would restore the old ideal of Athenian character which we read of in Thucydides:<sup>2</sup> "Their bodies they devote to their country, as though they belonged to other men; their true self is their mind which is most truly their own when employed in her service."

The *Politics* of Aristotle, more than any other single book, gives an orderly and comprehensive notion of what the Greeks meant by the State. There, as in the *Ethics*, Aristotle embodies for us the common sense of Greece, raised, however, as it were, to a higher power, clarified and systematised in passing through a master-mind. The picture of the State as it ought to be is, indeed, far enough removed in its details from the State as it was.

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* v. (viii.) 1. 1337 a 27, οὐδὲ χρὴ νομίζειν αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ τινα εἶναι τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντας τῆς πόλεως.

<sup>2</sup> Thucyd. i. 70, 6, Jowett's Translation.

Yet Aristotle is faithful to the principles that inspired Greek life. His ideal is not an arbitrary creation, a work of fancy. It stands in much closer relation to the reality than the *Republic* of Plato ; for though he, like Plato, sees the need of reconstruction of society, he does not break so sharply with the past. He had profoundly studied all existing political constitutions ; he had surveyed Hellenic civilisation in all its phases. In the *Politics* he gathers up the experience of the past ; he takes account of all current conceptions and actual institutions ; he recombines in a larger view popular opinions and lifts them into a higher plane of thought.

The State, then, as he describes it, is not an association for the protection of rights and nothing more. Such a view had been put forward by the Sophist Lycophron,<sup>1</sup> and was afterwards held by the Epicureans. It gained acceptance in the decline of Greek life, and was itself a symptom of the decline. It belonged to an age when the individual, severed from the State, claimed for himself prior rights, and looked to the State only as a means of securing for himself peace of mind and

<sup>1</sup> *Polit.* iii. 9. 1280 b 10, ὁ νόμος συνθήκη καί, καθάπερ ἔφη Λυκόφρων ὁ σοφιστής, ἐγγυητὴς ἀλλήλοις τῶν δικαίων.

personal independence. Nor, again, does the State exist for the increase of wealth, for the development of trade, or for the extension of empire. The State, according to Aristotle, is a union or brotherhood of equal men, who are able and purposed to rule and to be ruled ; not brought together by force or fear, but animated by a single aim,—to live the noblest life of which men are capable, in the unimpeded exercise of the highest qualities, moral and intellectual. The State exists not for the sake of “life,” but of “a good life” (not *τοῦ ζῆν* but *τοῦ εἶ ζῆν ἕνεκα*), which is the end of man. Certain external means of life are necessary and presupposed, for without them the play of the faculties would be impeded. But the conditions of life must not be confounded with the end of life. Some persons by reason of age or sex or race or disqualifying occupations were, according to Aristotle, cut off from any true participation in the life of the State. They could not become organic parts of the community, but were fitted only for lower and ministerial functions. Those only were capable of membership who could live for noble ends ; whose souls and bodies were not by nature incomplete, and inadequate to the great demands that were to be made on them,

or marred by sordid or engrossing occupations. Aristotle, in excluding from citizenship certain classes other than slaves on the ground that their employments were degrading, departs from the accepted usages of Greece. He is, however, merely exaggerating a feeling of contempt that was entertained for manual and industrial labour almost everywhere except, perhaps, at Athens.

In the broad lines of his teaching Aristotle, as we have said, falls in with the educated opinion and the traditions of Greece ; but these he deepens and enlarges. The State, for him, has a spiritual function. It does not exist for the satisfaction of bodily and material wants. Such wants it must supply, but its true aim lies beyond. It must look to the higher and spiritual needs of society. It must build up character and intellect. It must content itself with no one-sided type. It must unfold all the powers of the individual. It must train up its citizens to the full stature of the perfect man. It must promote not virtue alone but virtuous action, virtue flowing over into a life of moral and mental activity. πόλις ἄνδρα διδάσκει was a saying of Simonides. The City was the teacher, the guide of life, the sovereign educator. The truth of this had been felt and acted on in

Greece. Each City stood out as a person, a moral agent. It had its own character (*ἦθος*) and individual stamp. That character it impressed upon its members. Manifold were the agencies and influences by which it worked. It spoke to the citizens through its laws and constitution,<sup>1</sup> which were the truest image of itself. It spoke, as at Athens, through its art and architecture, in which the service of the State and of religion was united. It spoke through the poets, who at the great public festivals were more than private individuals. They bore, in some sort, the commission of the State; and, when in the hearing of their fellow-citizens they set forth their deepest thoughts upon the problems of life, they did their part towards harmonising ancient pieties and sacred legend with the moral sense of a more reflective age.

All this the State had done. But it might do yet more. So at least thought both Plato and Aristotle. It might directly take on itself the spiritual leadership of society. Formerly men had looked to Delphi to carry out this work. It was no mere curiosity about the future that

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Plato *Ep.* v. 321, ἔστι γὰρ δὴ τις φωνὴ τῶν πολιτειῶν ἐκάστης, καταπερεὶ τίνων ζώων, ἄλλη μὲν δημοκρατίας ἄλλη δ' ὀλιγαρχίας ἢ δ' αὖ μοναρχίας.



impelled the Greeks to inquire of Apollo. The questions which they addressed to the god concerned not only the changing fortunes of individuals or nations but the ordinances of divine law and the conduct of life. The purpose of the Delphic religion was to bear testimony to the eternal moral principles of which the gods were guardians, and to bring men into harmony with the divine will. As the god of purity, Apollo demanded not only outward ceremonial but purity of heart. As *Μουσαγέτης*, he was the god of art, of science, and of poetry, and aspired to organise the civic and national life. From the sanctuary at Delphi rules went forth for the discipline of states, for the shaping of law and custom, for the planting of colonies on every shore to which Greek seamen had penetrated. The influence of Delphi was in no small measure akin to that of Hebrew prophecy. The many-sided culture, artistic and intellectual, which proceeded from Delphi, had indeed no counterpart among the Jews; yet the Hebrew prophet, one part of whose office was to rehearse the history of Israel, to comment on the disasters and deliverances of the nation and to interpret past experience, exercised a function not dissimilar to that of Delphi. In each institution,

too, there was an assertion of the spirit over the letter ; in each the written law received a new and similar interpretation. "Clean hands and a pure heart" were required of all who would approach the holy hill either of Zion or of Parnassus. The conception of religion was transformed when it was detached from ritual practices and made to consist in the disposition of the mind and soul. When in Greek writers of the fourth century B.C. we come across such expressions as this,—that justice and goodness are the best of sacrifices, and prevail with the gods more than a hecatomb of victims,<sup>1</sup> we hear the echo of the teaching of Delphi. The idea is the same as was proclaimed in the words of the prophet : "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices ? . . . Bring me no more vain oblations. . . . Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well."

Delphi proved false to the trust that had been committed to her. The desire of wealth and power was her ruin. Enriched by offerings of pilgrims, by fines and confiscations, by the levy of tithes, she was drawn into the arena of political conflict. Nor could she hold herself aloof from

<sup>1</sup> Isoc. *Nicocles* § 20. Cp. Plat. *Laws* iv. 716 D.

party intrigues in the various states which looked to her for guidance. It was not, however, till the Persian wars that she finally forfeited her place, and renounced her right to represent Greek nationality and the ideal sentiment of the people. In aspiring to secular and material power she lost her spiritual dominion. Her influence did not at once die out. It perpetuates itself in other forms throughout Greek history and literature. We meet it not only in the lyrics of Pindar, but in the lives and works of the men who are most Hellenic among the Hellenes;—in the poetry of Aeschylus and Sophocles, in the art of Phidias, in the philosophy of Plato, in the lives of Socrates Epaminondas, Demosthenes, Callicratidas. But the integrity of Delphi itself was lost; and in the fourth century B.C. the Greek world lacked a religious centre, and craved for some authoritative voice in conduct and belief.

Society stood in deep need of moral guidance and regeneration. The foundations of right and wrong, of public and private morality, had been questioned. The states of Greece were cut in two by faction. The members of a political party were a sworn brotherhood—(Aristotle preserves for us, one of the forms of the oligarchical

oath<sup>1</sup>)—pledged not only to be loyal to one another, but to do to their opponents all the harm of which they were capable. Where, then, was a power which could restore unity and could rest morality once more on a sure basis? All Greek tradition pointed to the State. It alone seemed capable of the task. Alone it could speak with authority and had coercive force behind it. On the State, accordingly, Plato and Aristotle devolve many of the functions which were afterwards peculiar to the Christian Church. To the ancient world it never occurred that the State was “profane,” nor would the distinction between Church and State have been intelligible to the Greeks. Religious worship and ritual were inwrought into the texture of their political and social life. The Greek city was invested with a sacred character from the outset; it was the chosen home of protecting gods, the embodiment of the moral law, the visible expression of those ideal interests which were symbolised by the popular religion. Hence it was no startling innovation to regard each City as a spiritual centre for its own citizens, an authoritative exponent in matters of conscience and of conduct.

But the State, as conceived by the philosophers,

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* viii. (v.) 9. 1310 a 9.

• while in one aspect it resembled a Church, was also something more than a Church. On its secular side statesmanship had to concern itself with the outward means of livelihood, to regulate the production and distribution of wealth ; to lay down minute rules for the guidance of the individual from the cradle to the grave ; to exercise supreme control over all the practical arts, assigning to each its due rank and place.<sup>1</sup> It had to prescribe what sciences should be admitted and studied by different classes within the community. Above all the complete culture and education of the citizen must be undertaken by the State ; for this, the highest of all civic interests, was under existing social arrangements most defective. It must no longer be left in private hands, as at Athens. The training of the citizen thus becomes the chief concern of the political philosopher. ' Severe indeed was the preparation and long and arduous the self-discipline enjoined upon those who were to be rulers in the State ; and if few could hope to attain to such perfection those few were the men whom Nature had marked out as fitted to bear rule. With both Plato and Aristotle the construction of an ideal state merges in a scheme of national education.

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* i. I. 1094 a 27 *sqq.*

We may note in passing certain obvious defects in the general view of the State which we have been considering. The State is made to wield an unlimited sway for which it is unfitted. Its control over the individual, extending to the details of domestic life, and to thought as well as action, could not but defeat the purpose of culture and a free self-development which it was intended to promote. The vexatious rules and restrictions of the ideal commonwealths outnumber those of the actual Greek States. These were already numerous enough. The individual freedom which was enjoyed at Athens and which is extolled by Pericles was plainly an exception to the common usage of Greece, and is so regarded in the Funeral Speech. The word "freedom," it should be remembered, bore an ambiguous meaning. It denoted on the one hand political independence,—the exercise of sovereign power by the State and of political rights by the citizens. In this sense every Greek citizen could claim it as his birthright. Even the Spartans could tell the Persian Hydarnes that he had not, like them, tasted of freedom, and did not know whether it was sweet or not.<sup>1</sup> But the word also denoted personal and social liberty,—freedom from

<sup>1</sup> Herod. vii. 135.

the excessive restraints of law, the absence of a tyrannous public opinion and of intolerance between man and man. Pericles claims for Athens "freedom" in this double sense. But freedom so far as it implies the absence of legal interference in the private concerns of life was but little known except at Athens. Even where the individual was not conscious of being subject to irksome regulations and did not chafe under them, yet, as we can now see, the State strained its prerogative and exceeded the limits within which its control could be beneficial. The State as sketched by Plato in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* and by Aristotle in the *Politics* is modelled largely on the constitutions of Sparta and Crete, and exhibits their defects in an extreme form.

Again in these imaginary commonwealths, as in the real states of Greece, a whole class, or even classes, of the community are excluded from civic rights. While the idea had been deeply impressed upon the mind of Greece that government is for the good of the governed, and that the State exists for the welfare of all the citizens and not of some, yet the citizens themselves constituted an exclusive and privileged order. In the actual states the slave class existed in order that the

citizen body might be free to do its proper duties. The slaves formed no vital part of the city ; they were not sharers in its well-being ; they were merely instruments or "living tools" which nature had provided. Possessing only a rudimentary reason—so argued the philosophers—and being therefore incapable of attaining to more than a fraction of virtue and happiness, they differed from the freemen as the body differs from the soul or the brute from the man. It was therefore *better* for them to be servile than to be free. Aristotle, as we have seen, places not only slaves but artisans, labourers, shopkeepers, among the excluded classes ; for manual and mercantile labour tended, he thought, to make the minds of men unfree and their bodies degraded. He altogether overestimates the effect of social condition and occupation upon character. He does not remember his own admission that what makes a pursuit noble or ignoble is not the thing done, but the spirit and motive of the action. "I have known," says Burke, "merchants with the sentiments and abilities of great statesmen, and I have seen persons in the rank of statesmen with the conceptions and characters of pedlars." The "noble life," however, which it is the aim of the State to realise is



restricted by Aristotle to politics and philosophy, and, it would seem, to certain forms of art. The purpose of the State being, as he held, to develop the highest and most complete life possible for man, he fixes his attention on this to the neglect of another end, on which most modern reformers lay more stress,—that of developing in the mass of the people the highest type of life of which *they* are capable. We observe how Aristotle is here the child of his age. The aristocratic sentiment, which never has been stronger than in the ancient democracies, colours all his thinking.

A certain tone of contempt for what is worthy but commonplace, a certain exclusiveness of mind, pervades Greek literature up to a late date. Uninteresting and obscure goodness were lightly esteemed by the Greeks. They looked to the dignity, the inherent distinction and excellence of a man's personality. The qualities they admired were hardly to be attained without the advantages of birth and leisure. Their virtues were those of the free man, who is master of himself, lord of circumstances, above sordid anxieties, who respects himself and is respected by others. Amiel in his *Journal d'une Vie Intime* attempting to elucidate the English word "gentleman," "the Shibboleth

of England," says : " Between gentlemen, courtesy, equality, social proprieties ; below that level, haughtiness, disdain, coldness, indifference. . . . The politeness of a gentleman is not human and general, but quite individual and personal." It would be an injustice to the Greek to attribute to him all the features of this so-called " gentleman," yet we may see a family likeness between the two types. The Greek ideal of the *καλὸς κἀγαθὸς* had in it a touch of aristocratic sentiment ; it was well fitted for the favoured few, for the gifted, for the noble, for the strong ; but it left out of account the disinherited, the fallen, the feeble of the earth. Here the Greeks present to us the opposite side of the picture to that which is presented by the Jews. The Hebrew prophets, filled with the hope of seeing a reign of universal justice established in the world, are impatient of social inequalities ; they speak of the " poor," " the oppressed," as almost identical in sense with the pious and the good. The Greek philosophers would intensify existing inequalities. They are indeed far removed from the stage of thought represented by Theognis, with whom " the good " meant the nobles ; but their ideal conception is still that of an aristocracy, —an aristocracy, however, of intellect not of birth.

• We must not, of course, forget the glimpses and intuitions of humanity which are revealed in Greek authors with increasing clearness. In Homer already there is a reverence for the stranger and the suppliant, a tenderness towards the weak, a chivalrous honour which exacts less than its rights,—this and much more that is contained in the untranslatable word *αἰδώς*, in which the moral sentiment of the heroic age finds its most delicate utterance. Later there is the altar to Pity (*Ἔλεος*) at Athens; the Attic *φιλανθρωπία* or human kindliness,—compassion for the oppressed, generosity towards the vanquished, forgiveness of injuries,—which is the pride of the poets and orators. There is, again, in Aristotle a new and almost modern feeling about the poor, and special provisions are made for their welfare.<sup>1</sup> But these sentiments were very partial in their scope; they did not exist towards men as such, but towards special classes and individuals. Even when the sympathy appears to be more broadly human, it is not yet a reasoned principle of action, but rather one of the instinctive virtues of a high-born race, which would not shame its lineage by anything

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* vii. (vi.) 5. 1320 a 31 *sqq.*; vi. (iv.) 13. 1297 b 6-12; viii. (v.) 8. 1309 a 20-3.

mean ; and like all instincts is liable to be overborne at short notice by some mastering and competing passion. On the other hand, the Jews of the Old Testament, starting though they did from narrow tribal prejudices, acquired a more universal sympathy. They had learned by suffering. They had been outcasts and oppressed. By sharp discipline they had come to know the 'meaning of patience, of self-abnegation, of faith in the unseen ; and hence by right of deeper insight into the moral needs of man it has been their prerogative to be for all succeeding ages the consolers and interpreters of suffering humanity. They approached more nearly than the Greeks to the Christianity which places perfection not in dignity, nor in personal distinction, but in love.

The insufficient care for individual freedom in Aristotle, and the moral effacement of certain classes of the community, may be traced back to an imperfect conception of human personality. While Aristotle attributed to the State a more complete personality than it really possessed, he did not grasp the depth and meaning of the personality of the individual. Like the other Greeks of his time he did not appreciate the independent worth and dignity of all human beings. Of man

in the exercise of his sovereign faculty of pure reason, man akin to the divine and entering well-nigh on immortality through a life of speculative activity, he speaks with a glow and with an eloquence that are rare in his pages.<sup>1</sup> But to the life of morality without philosophy he assigns but a second place ; differing indeed there from Plato, who, holding that by moral virtue a man becomes like to God, exhibits a deeper insight than Aristotle into the notion of personality. Those who believe that the distinctive being of a man, his inmost self, resides in his moral personality, and that this is a common bond which unites all human beings as such, and gives to each an equal and independent worth, must feel how inadequate was the conception of the Greeks. To them the idea of man was realised in and through the State ; the idea, that is, not of man as man, but of man as a citizen, in his visible relations to the world, relations which varied in each case and created differences that almost effaced the unity of personality. Only here and there does Aristotle rise to the conception of man as such ;<sup>2</sup> but the phrase stands apart from his general thought ; in its con-

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* x. 7. 1177 b 19 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 11. 1161 b 8.

text it is meaningless and illogical, nor is it pushed to its conclusions. Man tends to disappear in the distinctions between husbands, wives, children, slaves and masters. Stoicism led the way to the deeper view of human brotherhood which Christianity revealed. Not until man was rescued out of the kingdom of nature and taken up into the commonwealth of God and into personal relations with the Divine Being, could he be more than the member of a social organism, or an instrument for achieving the ends of the State. Then only did a universal morality become possible and the idea of personality receive its full content.

Against these shortcomings we must set some lessons of permanent value which the Greeks have taught us, and which have not lost their meaning for this age. We may still learn from Greek thinkers that the moral and intellectual wellbeing of the citizens ranks first among the ends of the State, and the wealth of nations second; that fame, empire, trade, material comforts all must be subordinated to this paramount end. A people as well as an individual ought to be possessed by the disinterested love of what is noble, τὸ καλόν; they ought to remember that there is an intrinsic excellence in one type of life as compared with

another, and that the relative value of goods cannot be measured by their immediate social utility,—a standard which is dependent on the guesswork of short-sighted politicians. Further, that while we should aim at nothing less comprehensive than the welfare of the whole people, we should not lower the level of our aim by looking only to the capacities of average humanity. The basis of civilisation must be laid broad ; the mass of the people must receive the best culture of which they are capable. But there is a higher elevation of moral and intellectual achievement, of learning and science and spiritual culture, which is the crown of national existence, to which all nations that have been eminent in history have aspired, and which each in its degree has attained. This lofty and ideal perfection is not to be lost sight of even by the legislator, who in this age is being driven to concentrate all his efforts on raising the level of the lowest, on bettering their material condition, on mitigating the worst forms of misery and distress, and on removing the outward incentives to crime. It is one of the weakest points in most socialistic schemes that they narrow the horizon ; they take a low standard of human wellbeing ; and while they would make bad men better, and

the squalid comfortable, and would bring hours of leisure into over-worked and joyless lives, and would impart to every member of the community the rudiments of learning, yet they provide no satisfaction for the instinct of perfection ; they rest content with the inferior standard, and do not care to develop the rich and many-sided manhood, which the Greeks prized, not excessively, but only too exclusively. To the Greeks as to Burke the State is "a partnership in all science, in all art, in every virtue, in all perfection." It is just this partnership in all perfection that practical politicians put out of sight. Not that science, art, literature, or philosophy can be created by the direct action of the Legislature. But it makes no little difference how the State, in its collective and corporate character, behaves towards each of these ; in what honour or dishonour it holds them. The State may starve them with cold neglect, or it may admit its obligations towards them grudgingly and of necessity ; or again it may act on the conviction that the higher culture, the quickened intellectual life of the community, is the concern of the whole nation.

By the Greeks, again, we are reminded that the State is an organic unity ; that it is not the



Government of the day and that it did not come into being with an electoral contest: that its action is the action of the community, and the laws which it makes are the expression of the people's will and claim the obedience of all. And as the State is not the same thing as a party or combination of parties, still less is it an aggregate of divers and conflicting interests. In our own country in addition to the two great parties within the State, which are divided by momentous questions of public policy, there are at present various sections, cliques and coteries, jostling and struggling together for representation in the supreme Parliament. They are technically known as "interests"—the landed interest, the manufacturing interest, the shipping interest, the labour interest, the teetotal interest—these and many more besides; sectional interests one and all of them, which do not even rise to the dignity of party, because they are identified with no national policy or aims. Each is concerned with itself. The State is set aside. If Parliament should ever come to consist in the main of delegates representing these several interests, the wholeness, the soundness, the corporate unity of the State would be gravely imperilled.

And lastly the example and teaching of Greece recall to us that the State is not an abstraction, not a mechanism of government ; it is the individuals who compose it ; the State is the People. In ancient Athens it consisted of friends and neighbours, citizens who all sat together in the same assembly ; with us it consists of vast groups of unknown fellow-countrymen, who yet have a common past and common hopes for the future. The City-state has grown into a nation, but it is as true now as in the days of Pericles that the greatness of a State lies not in the multitude of its inhabitants, not in its machinery, not in docks and arsenals, not even in its institutions ; but in the great qualities of its individual citizens, in their capacity for high and unselfish effort, and their devotion to the public good.

## SOPHOCLES<sup>1</sup>

THE appearance of the first volume of a complete edition of Sophocles, by Professor Jebb, is an event of interest, not only to classical students, but to all who care for literature. No living English scholar unites in himself so many of the qualities which, for our generation, form the ideal of classical scholarship. He has the passion for the beauty, the feeling for style and literary expression, the artistic enthusiasm of the Italian Renaissance. But he is moreover a laborious worker over a wide field; he has grasped the history of the ideas and usages of the ancient world, and presents his learning in forms of graceful and finished composition. While the distinctive move-

<sup>1</sup> This article was published in the *Fortnightly Review* of June 1, 1884, as a notice of the first volume (*Oedipus Tyrannus*) of Professor Jebb's edition of Sophocles—a work which has now taken its rank among the great Editions of the Classics. Detailed criticism of detached passages is omitted in this reprint, and the latter portion of the paper has been enlarged.

ment of our own day in the province of classical criticism has been towards the union of the literary with the scientific spirit, the latter has tended to preponderate. The study of language and archaeology on the technical side seems at times to kill the literary sense. Professor Jebb has been largely affected by the scientific movement of the age; the growing influence upon him of the new critical and comparative methods may be traced in his successive writings. But the scientific influence has strengthened, not impaired, his literary perception by broadening the basis on which an appreciative judgment can be formed, and by adding clearness, completeness, and precision to his mode of statement and exposition.

After excursions into various domains of classical literature and archaeology, he has returned to Sophocles, the object of his earliest affections, with his brilliant powers enriched and invigorated by these wider studies. He is more erudite, more scientific, than before, but not less artistic.

This volume of Sophocles ought to appeal to the educated public through the fine literary criticism contained in the Introduction, and even more, perhaps, through the prose translation which accompanies the text. The translation, as Pro-

essor Jebb explains in his Preface, is intended primarily to be judged "from the stand-point of the commentator as an indispensable instrument of lucid interpretation." But he adds :—

"The second object which has been proposed to this edition regards educated readers generally, not classical students alone. It is my hope—whether a vain one or not I hardly know—that the English version facing the Greek text may induce some persons to read a play of Sophocles as they would read a great poem of a modern poet,—with no interposing nightmare of *τύπτω* as at Athens came between Thackeray and his instinctive sense of what was admirable in the nature and art around him,—but with free exercise of the mind and taste, thinking only of the drama itself, and of its qualities as such. Surely that is, above all things, what is to be desired by us just now in regard to all the worthiest literature of the world—that people should know some part of it *at first hand*, not merely through manuals of literary history or magazine articles.

"... Any one who had read thoroughly and intelligently a single play such as the *Oedipus Tyrannus* would have derived far more intellectual advantage from Greek literature, and would comprehend far better what it has signified in the spiritual history of mankind, than if he had committed to memory the names, dates, and abridged contents of a hundred Greek books ranging over half a dozen centuries."

It would be impossible to quote the innumerable felicities of the prose translation, or adequately to illustrate a quality which the Greeks call *μετρίότης*—the reserve, the temperate strength, the har-

monious perfection of the whole. A translator needs constantly to bear in mind the Greek proverb, "The half is greater than the whole"—a proverb whose truth has too often been forgotten by the authors of the Revised Version of the New Testament. Language must not be forced to go beyond its own capacities. No one else, it may be safely said, could have produced a translation in which the claims of the letter and the spirit are so finely reconciled.

The language of Sophocles may well strike despair into the translator or commentator. It is a mysterious union of popular<sup>1</sup> and literary idiom, of learning and originality. Apparently simple, it is full of subtle associations,<sup>2</sup> and charged with poetic memories of the past. Over and above its obvious sense it has a meaning and emotion which these memories and associations waken. It is a language of delicate suggestion and allusiveness, resembling in some measure the language of Virgil and of Milton. It means more—nay, at times something other—than it seems to say. Various lights and colours play about the words,<sup>3</sup> which

<sup>1</sup> For colloquial phrases see *O. T.* 336, 363, 971, 1008.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, *O. T.* 161, "Ἀρτεμιν, ἃ κυκλόνειτ' ἀγορᾶς θρόνον εὐκλέα θάσσει. 930, παντελὴς δάμαρ. See the notes on both passages.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, ὀφθαλμός, *O. T.* 987.

defy strict analysis ; when we attempt to reduce them to prosaic simplicity they elude our grasp. Without doing violence to Attic idiom, Sophocles freely handles familiar phrases, and puts a gentle pressure upon common words to extract from them a fresh significance.<sup>1</sup>

It sometimes becomes a nice question whether a word can, in some one or two passages, bear a meaning quite different from its current acceptance. It is doubtless the privilege of a poet to force a word back, along the line of its own development, in the direction of its etymology or of primitive usage. One of the boldest experiments of this kind is to be found in Tennyson's poem, "Love and Duty," where these lines occur :—

"Live—yet live—  
Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing all  
Life needs for life is possible to will—  
Live happy."

"Pathos" is here used in its old Greek sense of "suffering." The general tenor and context of the poem, as well as special phrases, such as "apathetic end," that precede, prepare us for this meaning. It remains, however, an open question

<sup>1</sup> See notes on *O. T.* 34, δαιμόνων συναλλαγαῖς ; 420 and 1208, λιμήν ; 728, ὑποστραφεῖς ; 677, ἕσος.

whether the experiment is not too venturous. Now, some distinguished Greek scholars have supposed that in *Oed. Tyr.* 44-45 :—

ὥς τοῖσιν ἐμπείροισι καὶ τὰς ξυμφορὰς  
ξώσας ὁρῶ μάλιστα τῶν βουλευμάτων,

the word *ξυμφοράς*, in combination with *τῶν βουλευμάτων*, has, contrary to its recognised usage, the meaning of *comparisons* (of counsels), on the analogy of the corresponding verb *ξυμφέρειν*. Professor Jebb rightly, as I think, decides against this view, and supports his opinion with equal learning and humour. But, it might be asked, is such a departure from usage more violent than Tennyson's "pathos"? Yes, and for this reason,—that in Tennyson the context is itself a sufficient guide, and places the meaning beyond all doubt, while in Sophocles the unfamiliar sense—if, indeed, it is intended—comes on us as a surprise, and is, at the best, highly ambiguous.

Plutarch<sup>1</sup> records a striking statement made by Sophocles about himself, to the effect that, after he had outgrown the pompous style of Aeschylus (τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχὸς ὄγκον), he adopted a harsh and artificial manner (τὸ πικρὸν

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *De Profect. in Virt.* ch. vii.



καὶ κατὰτεχνον), which he finally exchanged for that style which "is best suited for ethical portraiture." Now, his dramatic activity extended over sixty-two years, during which time he wrote one hundred and thirteen plays. His seven extant tragedies belong, it would seem, to the third of the periods above indicated, and represent his mature style, which is equally removed from turgid grandeur and affected ingenuity, and expresses with unrivalled truth and delicacy the play of the idealised human emotions.

It requires a highly trained capacity to detect the niceties of the Sophoclean language, to note the deflections from ordinary usage, and to interpret the pregnant expressions of the poet without petrifying them into rigid forms which cannot contain them. Professor Jebb is gifted with a sympathetic insight into Greek idiom and the latent powers of the language. He has a remarkable—one might say a unique—faculty of infusing poetry into grammar, of leading his readers through particles, moods, and tenses, vividly to realise the dramatic situation and enter into the feelings of the speaker. Under his guidance we seem not so much to be engaged in a work of logical analysis or of skilful dissection as to be following a vital

process of growth and of construction. We are admitted to watch the inner movements of the poet's thought and to see the motives which, in all probability, determined the choice of this or that word or phrase. The style of the tragic dialogue in particular has never been so justly appreciated or luminously interpreted as in this edition. Between the language of the dialogue and of the lyrical portions of a Greek play there is an important distinction to be borne in mind. In writing choral songs the dramatists had well-known models to follow, and employed a style that was prescribed by literary tradition. A new problem had to be solved when they came to the dialogue. Here they were discovered entering upon new paths, and had difficulties to overcome not unlike those which were encountered by the first Greek historians and orators, in whose hands an artistic prose was shaped.

The dramatic poet, whose province it was to compress into a brief compass the portrayal of character in action, to depict the conflict between individual wills, to delineate the successive moments in the fortunes of the actors and the corresponding feelings awakened in their minds, needed a vehicle of literary expression which should convey reason-

ings terser and more compact, thought and emotion more concentrated, than could be conveyed through the epic or the lyrical style. Tragedy, moreover, even before it became in the hands of Euripides a poetical image of public debate in the law-courts and assemblies, could not but catch the tone and accent of civic life. Professor Jebb tells us in his preface, that in the course of preparing his commentaries on the *Electra* and the *Ajax*, he "had been led to see more clearly the intimate relation which in certain respects exists between Greek tragic dialogue and Greek rhetorical prose, and to feel the desire of studying more closely the whole process by which Greek oratory had been developed." Thus it was "as a preparation in one department for the task of editing Sophocles that the special studies embodied in the *Attic Orators* had originally been undertaken."

These and kindred studies have supplied him with a wealth of material hitherto unused in interpreting the tragic dialogue, while his powers of lucid expression enable us to follow with ease the reconstructive effort of the commentator, and with him to trace the process by which the colloquial idiom is moulded anew as it passes through the imagination of the poet. None but a scholar who

is imbued with Greek modes of thinking and feeling, and penetrated by the Greek spirit, could attempt such a task without falling into fanciful speculations. But not the least of Professor Jebb's virtues as a commentator is his perfect sanity and sobriety of judgment.

In discovering double meanings and constructions in the Sophoclean language much tact and caution are necessary. Conington, in his commentary on Virgil, was in possession of a true idea, one which may be applied to Sophocles as well as to Virgil, when he sought to disentangle the various associations and reminiscences which are woven into the texture of the Virgilian phrases, and to show the blended colours which meet in a single word. But even he is sometimes led to press the principle to a point at which the different meanings are not different only but mutually inconsistent. Take, for instance, his comment on *Æneid* i. 748-9 :—

“Nec non et vario noctem sermone trahebat  
Infelix Dido.”

Here he attempts to find in the phrase, *trahere noctem*, the double sense of “to speed the night along,” and “to protract the night.” “Perhaps,” he says, “Virgil intended to blend the two notions

in spite of their apparent inconsistency." The inconsistency, surely, is real as well as apparent.

Now the extension of a similar principle to Greek syntax requires to be very carefully guarded and explained, if we would avoid a confusion which in this case is so far worse than in the first, as it affects not a particular phrase only, but the whole thought of a sentence. No one, indeed, will deny that the Greek language admits of what the grammarians call "mixed" constructions, in which two modes of expressing the same thought have, as it were, met and fought together, and neither has completely prevailed over the other. But commentators are too ready to shirk rather than to solve a grammatical difficulty by referring in vague terms to this principle ; nay, there are notes in which moods and cases are subjected to a double grammatical government, in such a way as to imply that contradictory ideas were together present in the mind of the writer. It seems to be assumed that a "mixed construction" naturally produces a confused thought. But the assumption is by no means true. A thought may be conveyed through forms which from the grammatical point of view are imperfectly fused, and yet the thought itself, which results from this imperfect fusion, need

not be blurred or indistinct, much less self-contradictory. A clear thought often struggles for utterance, and fails to express itself in strict and logical form, not because the speaker does not know what he means, but because he is over eager to say it.

That Greek modes of speech are too subtle and flexible to be bound by the rules of grammarians, that they break loose from such rigorous prescriptions and follow the ways of the living voice and the spontaneous movements of thought, is a fact which the commentator has often forgotten, and of which he needs again and again to be reminded. But some who have done good service in stating and illustrating this principle, have occasionally presented it in such a light as to suggest that in the days of Thucydides and Sophocles language was in so fluid a state and grammar so unfixed, that words might mean almost anything, and that clear thinking is as little to be looked for from the Periclean age as accurate writing. That Thucydides was writing in an ante-grammatical age is true only in the sense that he was writing in an age previous to grammarians. But there was grammar before there were grammarians, and a grammar, moreover, far more precise than was observed by the Elizabethan dramatists,

who cannot be accepted as affording a perfect parallel to the Greek tragedians. The grammar of Sophocles is not, indeed, as strict and systematic as that of the Homeric poems ; still it is part of a developed Attic idiom, whose normal usages had been firmly traced, in which moods, voices, tenses are in no way interchangeable, whose very irregularities were due rather to the desire for clearness and naturalness, than to confused modes of thought.

In Thucydides, and even in Sophocles, there are many experiments in words and in construction, many tentative and some hazardous forms of expression, which Aristophanes or Demosthenes would have rejected, but nothing which would warrant us in placing either author above the genius and idiom of the language. At what point neglect of grammar becomes violation of idiom cannot be stated in general terms. Special instances must be taken and scrutinised each on its own merits, and it is one of the marked features of Professor Jebb's edition that, in estimating the value of various readings or in justifying a phrase or construction, he faces the problem in each case, and lets us see how "irregular" grammar may yet be perfectly idiomatic. The

elasticity of the Greek language is not license or caprice. It arises from the desire to add life and variety, to adjust new ideas to existing but inadequate forms of speech, to arrange the thought in a framework supplied by nature rather than by the laws of grammatical sequence and symmetry, so that the general form in which a sentence is cast influences the syntactical structure of the parts. Attraction, false analogy, sudden changes of construction—these and many other things are admitted by the Greeks to a degree that is unknown in Latin writers. The difficulty of the commentator lies not so much in stating the principle truly as in applying it correctly; and it is mainly by the application that the merits of grammatical criticism must be tested. I have heard the late Mr. R. Shilleto, towards the end of his life, say that the longer he lived the more reluctant he was to declare anything impossible in Greek. Such a saying would satisfy the most advanced believers in grammatical laxity. But when he came to grapple with the difficulties of the text, and to discuss whether some given expression was admissible in Greek, no one could more triumphantly vindicate the genius and the true idiom of the language.



One of the first questions that meets a commentator is, how far it is his duty to give alternative explanations. The natural bent of those whom we may call οἱ ῥέοντες—those who treat the Attic Greek of the middle of the fifth century B.C. as in a perfectly fluid and unstable condition—is to multiply such alternatives without giving any, or, at least, a sufficient reason for preferring one alternative to another. There are, doubtless, not a few passages where it would require a very audacious person to pronounce confidently between rival interpretations. Most scholars can recall lines over which they have hesitated long, when the balance seems so nicely poised that it depends on some accident of the moment—a passing mood or touch from without—to determine which way it shall incline. But this is true of poetic diction, not in Greek only, but in all languages, including our own. If, however, in every third or fourth line of a poem we are reduced to such honest doubts and waverings, we must infer either that the author writes badly, or that we have a very imperfect acquaintance with the language. It is to be hoped that our knowledge of Greek and Latin is not really so much a matter of guess-work as the numerous alternatives offered to us by

classical editors would imply. Sometimes it may happen that we have in our own mind a strong conviction in favour of one definite interpretation, but that the impression is incommunicable ; it rests on a sense or instinct which cannot be justified by argument. In such cases the final verdict must be left to the few who are acknowledged to possess the surest insight and the finest tact in handling language. There is no other court of appeal.

But putting aside such cases, there are, as a rule, valid grounds on which a decision may be based. It is almost as serious an error for a commentator to place side by side several interpretations without furnishing the materials for arriving at a rational conclusion, as it would be for a writer on etymology to give us an open choice between a guess of Plato's and a scientific result of comparative philology. Many current interpretations are demonstrably wrong, and the only sufficient excuse for mentioning them at all is that they are still current, and therefore need refutation. But the mere fact that some great name is associated with an absurd interpretation is hardly a plea for reviving it, unless it happens to raise a point of interest in the history of literary criticism. Still

less ought the stray fancies of obscurer critics to be recorded in the notes among a series of other options equally ingenious, but no less certainly wrong. In nine cases out of ten the author doubtless had a single meaning, and it is the business of one who interprets him to tell us what he conceives that meaning to have been, and to show the grounds of his decision. The practice observed by Professor Jebb in this edition has, on the whole, been to mention various interpretations only where there is room for serious and legitimate doubt as to the meaning of the poet. He ignores such alternatives as are not commended either by their intrinsic merit or by a weight of authority which cannot be disregarded. Yet his notes, while generally avoiding direct refutation, incidentally sweep aside a large mass of rubbish which has found its way into many editions. '

This is not the place to discuss in detail the subject of conjectural emendations. No one, however, who has studied the history of textual criticism, will be inclined to slight the gains that scholarship has won through the labours in this department, not only of past generations of scholars, but in our own day of such men as Cobet (in spite of rashness) and Madvig. Those who judge

Madvig only by his *Adversaria Critica*, where admirable theory is united to some very dubious practice, and who think of him as the author of a few brilliant and of many superfluous emendations of Greek prose, not to mention certain tasteless and even unmetrical verse emendations, ought to study him at his best in the *De Finibus* of Cicero and in his emendations of Livy, whose pages have been illuminated under his touch. In passing, it may be observed that Latin prose authors, from one point of view, afford the best field for the exercise of an emendator's faculty, owing to the very rigour and precision of Latin prose idiom. But, after all, the limits within which such a second-sight as Bentley claimed for himself—"a certain divining tact and inspiration"—can profitably be employed, are singularly narrow. Many sanguine hopes would be abated if we did but reflect what a small percentage of conjectures have borne the test of time and received the stamp of scientific certitude.

Of all authors Sophocles is one of the most perilous for a critic to tamper with:—

"His style," says Professor Jebb (p. lviii.), "is not seldom analogous to that of Virgil in this respect, that, when his instinct felt a phrase to be truly and finely expressive he left the logical analysis of it to the discretion of grammarians then unborn. I might instance  $\nu\hat{\nu}\nu$   $\pi\hat{\alpha}\sigma\iota$

χαίρω (*O. T.* 596). Such a skill may easily provoke the heavy hand of prosaic correction ; and, if it requires sympathy to interpret and defend it, it also requires, when it has once been marred, a very tender and very temperate touch in any attempt to restore it."

Nothing could be better said ; and the caution was never more needed than to-day, when Greek texts are being not emended but re-written. Scholarship at this moment has as much to fear from erudite absurdities as from almost any other cause. The worst of it is that the figments of emendators claim admission in the name of common sense, which frequently serves only as a mask for ignorance of Greek idiom. Ingenuity without insight, encyclopaedic study without judgment or perception, these are the things that corrupt the classics and bring learning itself into disrepute. Professor Jebb has been faithful to the canons he himself has laid down about emendation. He deals in conjecture only where the reading of the MSS. is confessedly hopeless. His own conjectures are fourteen in number, of which he admits nine into the text. Most of these are highly plausible, and two of them attain as nearly as can be to certainty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first and most striking occurs in line 1218, where the MSS. have *δύρομαι γὰρ ὡς περιάλλα λαχέων* (*vv. ll. περιάλλα, ἀχέων*) ἐκ

It is not possible here to convey any idea of the interest of the commentary itself—of the sagacity and discrimination with which the exact force of words and phrases,<sup>1</sup> and the connection of thought are seized and elucidated. Those who study the book will find it to be, in the best sense of the word, original,—not by startling conjecture and paradox, but in power of delicate insight and interpretation, in a masterly handling of difficulties, and in the apprehension of each part and every detail in its bearing on the whole.

The *Oedipus Tyrannus* forcibly suggests the question, How are suffering and guilt related according to the view of Sophocles? We have in this play an eminent example of a man, not indeed perfect, yet noble and of good intentions, who is led on by a train of events that baffled human foresight into unconscious crimes and over-

στομάτων. Professor Jebb's brilliant restoration is δύρομαι γὰρ ὥσπερ λάλεμον χέων ἐκ στομάτων, "I wail as one who pours a dirge from his lips." The second of such corrections is in 1280, where the simple change of κακὰ to κατὰ makes perfect sense of the passage.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the notes on 35 (ἐξέλυσας δασμόν), 227 (ὑπεξελεῖν), 313 (ῥύσαι μίασμα), 354 (ἐξεκίνησας ῥῆμα), 628 (ἀρκτέον), 674 (θυμοῦ περάσης), 709 (μαντικῆς ἔχον τέχνης), 790 (προῦφάνη λέγων), 846 (ολόζωνος), 978 (πρόνοια), 997 (ἡ Κόρινθος . . . ἀπωκείτο), 1077 (βουλήσομαι), 1483 (προὔξενσαν). The delicate use of the particles is vividly interpreted in the notes to this edition (e.g. 105, 342, 822, 852, 1030).

whelming calamity. Is it that the gods take a wanton pleasure in smiting down, age after age, a mighty house like that of the Labdacidae? Or is there between the deeds and fortunes of Oedipus an inward and moral connection such that his sufferings are a punishment for defects of character, great as the disproportion may seem to be between the penalty and the fault? Or, again, is there some other explanation, consonant with Greek feeling and with what we know of the religious temper of Sophocles?

There was, no doubt, a popular idea that the gods were jealous of man, in whom they saw a restless and dangerous rival. They watched his progress, they resented his achievements, they delighted to overthrow him unawares. Not the impious spirits only who grasped at divine privileges incurred their hostility. The benefactors of mankind are also among their victims; for in the triumphs of civilising genius they saw an encroachment upon their own rights. Kings and potentates at the height of their greatness stood most in peril of attack from these jealous powers, and at such moments it was their wisdom to appease the gods with the best thing they had. Man was permitted to enjoy a certain limited measure of

prosperity ; but he must learn to know his place. The distinction must not be effaced between the divine and the human nature.

In the Homeric poems there are as yet but few traces of the divine Jealousy. The idea gathered strength during the period of the Tyrannies ; mainly, as it would seem, owing to the impressive catastrophes, the warning examples, of that age. Herodotus, more than any other Greek author, reflects the features of the primitive belief. One view under which he exhibits the gods is that of privileged despots who resent all eminence in others, and who take a malignant delight in levelling down human greatness to a safe mediocrity.<sup>1</sup> It is the view expressed by Aesop, who when asked what was the occupation of Zeus, answered, "To humble the exalted and to exalt the humble" (*τὰ μὲν ὑψηλὰ ταπεινοῦν, τὰ δὲ ταπεινὰ ὑψοῦν*).<sup>2</sup> Yet a righteous purpose is not unseldom seen to govern their dealings with men. The guilty are punished even if the innocent share their doom ; the working of moral motives modifies the capricious action of the divine rule. Between these two aspects of the government of the world Herodotus

<sup>1</sup> Herod. i. 32 ; iii. 40 ; vii. 10 ; vii. 46. Cp. Thucyd. vii. 77. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Diog. Laert. i. 3.



wavers. On the whole he is able to discern a righteous plan in the ordering of events. But the popular creed held its ground long and tenaciously. How persistent it was may be inferred from the protests of Plato,<sup>1</sup> of Aristotle,<sup>2</sup>—who seldom meddles with such subjects,—and of Plutarch.<sup>3</sup> The daemonic force which appeared to be at work in shaping human destiny, and which was personified as divine Jealousy (Φθόνος), always remains below the surface of Greek history; this power came to be recognised as an independent deity, and received embodiment in art. Even Pindar, who cast off so many of the grosser elements of the received religion, had not been able to rid himself of this belief. In celebrating his victorious athletes he is apprehensive lest such high praise may bring down the envy of the immortals. Visions rise before him of the great ones of the earth who had mounted too high and were suddenly struck low. He checks himself in his course; he utters a counsel of humility or a pious prayer that envy may be averted.

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedr.* 247 A, φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θεοῦ χάριτος ἵσταται.

<sup>2</sup> *Met.* i. 2. 983 a 2, ἀλλ' οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερὸν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἄνθρωποι, οὔτε κ.τ.λ.

<sup>3</sup> *Non posse suaviter, etc.*, ch. 22, ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ἔστιν (sc. ὁ θεός) ἀγαθῷ δὲ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος.

It was an incomparable service that Aeschylus rendered in attempting to correct and enlighten this primitive belief. He shared the sentiment, which saw in every great reverse of fortune a judicial act; but the sentence, as he read it, was not pronounced by jealous or capricious powers, but by a supreme and moral governor of the universe. In the course of events and in all human destinies he traced the righteous and overruling hand of Zeus, "the Almighty," "King of Kings," "who rewards all men according to their works." Everywhere and in all cases there is an inner and necessary connection between men's actions and their outward fortunes. Not only in the vicissitudes of nations and families, but also in the history of individuals, the same law of moral retribution holds good. Each man fares according to his deserving; even the individual life, viewed in its happiness and misery, is long enough to justify the ways of God to man. In Aeschylus Nemesis or divine Justice displaces the divine Jealousy. The notion of rightness or justness is never absent from the word. In the drama of India the wrath of the gods is called down by the trifling omission of a religious formula. In the Greek drama Nemesis is the penalty of wrong-

doing. It punishes, above all, that Insolence or *ὕβρις* which has its root in want of reverence and want of self-knowledge, which is the expression of a self-centred will recognising no power outside itself, and knowing no law but its own impulses. Nemesis is not a caprice.

This Insolence in the Greek tragedy is the deepest source of moral evil. It is the spirit of blind self-reliance which does not respect eternal ordinances, which seeks to overpass the bounds set for mortality and ignores the conditions of existence. It is opposed to both *αἰδώς* and *σωφροσύνη*. In the sphere of religion it is manifested not only in the irreverent deed, but in the presumptuous word or thought,—in a pride that is untempered by the sense of human frailty. In the sphere of human relations it shows itself in the arrogance of the Oriental monarch, in the shout of triumph over the fallen foe, in the contempt of the suppliant, in the disregard of others' rights and feelings. The Nemesis that overtakes it is the retribution that follows upon sin. Nothing can be more false than to confound the Nemesis of Greek tragedy with the Jealousy of the gods as popularly conceived, or to find the distinctive difference between the classical and the modern

drama in the transition from the sway of jealous gods to the idea of moral retribution. The tragic Nemesis of the Greeks rests not on a mere feeling of artistic measure or proportion, but on the conviction of an eternal law of conduct whose violation brings punishment. The motto of the Aeschylean drama is, "The guilty suffers" (*δράσαντι παθεῖν*); crime it is that brings disaster and final ruin.

If some tragedies of Aeschylus seem at first sight to rest under a sombre fatalism or to be presided over by the vigilance of jealous gods, a closer study will show that here too events are not guided by blind or arbitrary forces, but are the outcome of character and subject to moral laws. In the *Agamemnon*, for example, the shadow of doom throws itself forward from the first; the atmosphere is charged with sinister presentiments, even in the midst of victory. The keynote of suspicion and mystery is struck by the watchman. Each successive song of the Chorus either calls up some old and dark reminiscence, or hints at some new foreboding. But throughout runs the sense of crime committed that must needs be expiated. The Chorus—here clearly the mouth-piece of the poet—expressly dissents from the old

belief that mere prosperity produces calamity (v. 750). The guilt that Agamemnon had incurred in slaying Iphigeneia, is visited on him now in the hour of his triumph when he is flushed with pride and insolence. At such a time Nemesis is most to be dreaded, not because the gods are jealous, but because men are then apt to become reckless.

Other popular beliefs were in like manner newly interpreted by Aeschylus. The curse of a father was thought to have an almost magical efficacy and to carry with it a certainty of fulfilment. Originally, perhaps, it was associated with the exercise of certain judicial powers by the parent. In any case it is as old as Homer.<sup>1</sup> It is the Greek parallel to the patriarchal blessing of the Hebrews. The latter idea was unfamiliar to Greek thought, though Plato<sup>2</sup> tentatively suggests that if the imprecation of a father is divinely ratified, his prayers for blessing may well have in them a similar virtue. The operation of the curse, as exhibited both in Aeschylus and in Sophocles, is part of a moral law. It is no arbitrary sentence of doom. Once it has gone forth it is irrevocable, but it is not pronounced

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* ix. 453, 566. *Odyss.* ii. 135

<sup>2</sup> *Laws* xi. 931 C.

except over those who are already hardened offenders. On them it invokes not suffering merely but fresh guilt. It is, as it were, a solemn excommunication. Morally it is based on the conviction that there are some sins, such as filial impiety, which leave no place for repentance. The imprecation uttered by Oedipus upon his sons in the *Oedipus Coloneus* is so terrible that modern imitators of Sophocles prefer to make Oedipus relent. But the Greek Oedipus is implacable. He speaks not merely as the aggrieved father, but as the representative of outraged justice, the spokesman of the Erinyes ; unlike Lear, whose imprecation on Goneril, in its refinement of cruelty, betrays a mind maddened by the sense of a personal wrong. The victims of the curse in Aeschylus employ the language of fatalism. They throw themselves with a recklessness half of triumph, half of despair, into fulfilling the prophecy of evil. The curse has gone forth ; let it work ; they will swim with wind and stream :

ἐπεὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα κάρτ' ἐπισπέρχει θεός,  
 ἴτω κατ' οὖρον κῶμα Κωκυτοῦ λαχόν  
 Φοίβῳ στυγῆθ' ἐν πᾶν τὸ Λαῖον γένος.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the tone of Eteocles in the *Thebans*. Yet

<sup>1</sup> *Theb.* 689-91.

it is very plain that though Eteocles speaks as a fatalist, he acts as a free man.

The problem of fate and free-will presented itself again, and in a more complex form, in the received doctrine of an hereditary curse. Legend told of families in which, owing to some ancestral crime, the taint of guilt was transmitted in the blood, and generation after generation was visited by the anger of the gods. "If the criminals escape," writes Solon,<sup>1</sup> "and the doom of the gods overtakes them not yet—soon or late the doom comes: the guiltless children or descendants pay the forfeit." The idea had its origin in primitive times when the solidarity of the family was strongly felt. The individual as a moral being was hardly kept distinct from the community to which he belonged. If one member of the community committed a crime all his family paid the penalty, either as fellow-sufferers with him or as suffering vicariously on his behalf. The guilt as well as the punishment was supposed to be corporate. Hence arose the idea of a curse bequeathed through successive generations, entailing on posterity not suffering merely but sin. The hold that this doctrine had over the popular conscious-

<sup>1</sup> Solon xiii. 29-32 (Bergk).

ness, and its influence on practical politics, is attested by repeated incidents in the history of the Alcmaeonidae, who in the person of Megacles had incurred the pollution of a sacrilegious murder.

The question of corporate guilt and of long delayed punishment was one which troubled the conscience of Greece down to a late period of her history. Euripides, so Plutarch says,<sup>1</sup> boldly accused the gods of injustice in visiting the sins of the parents upon the children (τὰ τῶν τεκόντων σφάλματα εἰς τοὺς ἐγγόνους τρέποντας). It was in his manner to make a reasoned protest against the moral inconsistencies which he discovered in the popular theology. In the argument addressed by Tyndareus to Menelaus<sup>2</sup> he denounces the primitive law of vengeance, which gave religious sanction to the deed of Orestes. Blood calls for blood; each crime becomes a new link in a series of guilty acts; where can an end be found? In a similar spirit he appears to have dealt with the kindred doctrine here under consideration. Prose writers, too, other than the philosophers, betray their dissatisfaction with this tenet of the popular theology. Isocrates<sup>3</sup> praises the superior piety of

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *De Ser. Num. Vind.* ch. 12; cp. Eur. *Hippol.* 831-3, 1378-1383. *Frag.* 83. <sup>2</sup> Eur. *Orest.* 491-525. <sup>3</sup> Isocr. *Busiris*, xi. 25.



the Egyptians, who held that the penalty of each misdeed is exacted at the moment, and not put off to a later generation. In Plutarch's tract *De Sera Numinis Vindicta* the same problem is discussed on various sides. Some of the difficulties are met that are inherent in the proverb, "The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind small" (ὁψρὲ θεῶν ἀλέουσι μύλοι, ἀλέουσι δὲ λεπτά). Plutarch himself piously supports the prevalent belief in the curse in a house. Sometimes, he argues (ch. xv.-xvi. cp. ch. xxi.), it is a city, sometimes a race, on which the wrath of the god descends. In either case the principle of justice is the same. A city is a kind of living organism, it has a continuous existence, a unity, a personality not unlike that of the individual. It is morally responsible for its past. A race, too, has a like continuity of its own; it preserves certain dominant characteristics, birthmarks of the family, which if vicious, need a corrective discipline as often as they reappear in successive generations. The analogy, however imperfect, is interesting and worth noting, though it does not go far to vindicate the view that is upheld.

The personal conviction of Aeschylus as to this problem is to be gathered from the

dramatic presentation of the facts, not from the arguments of rival disputants. In one vital particular he modifies the popular belief. Not actual guilt, but the tendency to guilt is inherited. A man is master of his own fate; he may foster the tendency, or he may resist it. An act of will is necessary to wake the curse into life. The chain of crime may at any point be broken, though the poet rather exhibits, for the most part, the natural continuity of guilt; that as crime engenders crime in the individual heart, so in a house the guilt of the fathers tends to lead the children into new guilt and to extend itself over a whole race. There is a striking resemblance between the language in which Aeschylus and George Eliot describe the self-productive energy of evil. In the words of Aeschylus<sup>1</sup>: "The impious deed leaves after it a larger progeny, all in the likeness of the parent stock." In the more elaborated phrase of George Eliot: "our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our will: nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never; they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness."

Still Aeschylus never allows human freedom to

<sup>1</sup> *Agam.* 758-60.

be obliterated, even in the members of a tainted race. By an initial act of man's free-will the latent guilt is evoked. In this he departs from the popular theology and saves morality. He handles those myths which deal with the domestic curse in much the same spirit as he treats the doctrine of divine Infatuation. The popular form of that doctrine is expressed, for instance, by Theognis,<sup>1</sup>—that a man of good intentions is often misled by some supernatural power into grievous transgressions, so that evil appears to him good and good evil. Aeschylus, too, recognises in certain forms of mental blindness a divine influence. There is a malady of the mind (*νόσος φρενῶν*), a heaven-sent hurt (*θεοβλάβεια*), which drives the sinner to destruction. This infatuation or *Ate* is a clouding both of heart and of intellect; it is also both the penalty and the parent of crime. But only when a man has wilfully set his face towards evil, when, like Xerxes in the *Persae*, or Ajax in the play of Sophocles, he has striven to rise above human limits, or like Creon in the *Antigone* has been guilty of obdurate impiety, is a moral darkening inflicted on him in judicial anger. Here Aeschylus and Sophocles agree. As we

<sup>1</sup> Theogn. 402-6.

read in the Old Testament that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," so in Aeschylus, "when a man is hasting to his ruin the god helps him on."<sup>1</sup> It is the dark converse of "God helps those who help themselves." "With wisdom," says Sophocles, "hath some one given forth the famous saying, that evil seems good soon or late to him whose mind the god draws to mischief."<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of an inherited tendency towards guilt in a house reminds us, on one side, of the doctrine of original sin as the consequence of Adam's sin; and, on another, of modern theories of inherited qualities. I neither of these can be called fatalism, equally inapplicable is the word to the teaching of the Greek poets.

Much misconception has prevailed as to the place of Fate in the Greek drama. We are apt to confuse the meaning of the Greek word *Moirai*, of which "Destiny" is in general the nearest equivalent, by associations derived from later controversies about free-will. Viewed etymologically its primary idea is that of *distribution*; and its

<sup>1</sup> *Pers.* 742, ἀλλ' ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χῶ θεὸς συνάπτεται. Cp. Aesch. *Frag.* 386 (Nauck) φιλεῖ δὲ τῇ κάμνοντι συσπεύδειν θεός; and 294, ἀπάτης δικαίας οὐκ ἀποστατεῖ θεός.

<sup>2</sup> *Antig.* 621-4 (Jebb's trans.)

usage suggests not so much that which is predestined, as that which is appointed as part of the moral order of the universe ; and in this sense we find the corresponding adjective *μόρσιμος* applied even to the marriage tie as ordained between man and wife.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in the normal use of the word to give prominence to the thought that the details of the individual life are mapped out according to a predetermined plan and sequence. Already in Homer it has a twofold usage. On the one hand it is *what is decreed*,—a poetic expression for that fundamental order of things which later prose writers would call *φύσις*. On the other hand, it is the power that regulates the course of human affairs, allotting to all their proper place. This power is supreme over gods as well as men, though in more than one instance Zeus thinks of attempting to defeat it in the interests of some favourite. But as the stream of Greek thought ran clearer such discord between the ruling powers of the universe became an offence. In the *Prometheus*, indeed, of Aeschylus there is still a conflict between Zeus and Necessity,—Necessity as guided by “the triple Moirai and the mindful Erinyes,”<sup>2</sup>—and so long as it lasts Zeus cannot

<sup>1</sup> *Eum.* 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Prom.* 516.

be at one with Justice. But the Zeus of the *Prometheus* is not the great Omnipotent, the highest impersonation of godhead. At the time at which the dramatic action is laid he is still the god of a passing epoch, when the turmoil of contending dynasties was hardly subdued, and might was the only right. His will comes into collision with an inscrutable power against which he cannot prevail. Elsewhere in Aeschylus the course of events is under the ordered and developed rule of Zeus. The decrees of Destiny are in Aeschylus, as they already were in Pindar,<sup>1</sup> identified with his will. A perfect harmony has been established. "That which is destined will surely be accomplished; the great purposes of Zeus may not be transgressed."<sup>2</sup> But the more abstract conception of Moira was not superseded: it was the sum of those mysterious forces which limit human life and act on it from outside. In obedience to a Greek instinct the poets generally attribute to the Olympian gods the happy events of life, while

<sup>1</sup> Pind. *Nem.* iv. 61, τὸ μόρσιμον Διόθεν πεπρωμένον ἔκφε-  
ρεν.

<sup>2</sup> Aesch. *Suppl.* 1047; cp. *Eum.* 1045, Ζεὺς ὁ πανόπτας οὕτω  
Μοῖρά τε συγκατέβα. *Choeph.* 306 ἀλλ' ὦ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν  
τῇδε τελευτᾶν. Pausanias mentions *Μοιραγέτης* as an epithet of  
Zeus (v. 15; viii. 37, etc.)

they ascribe misfortune to the more impersonal and darker power, Moira.

In all this however the will of man is not, as we are sometimes told, paralysed by Destiny, by an overhanging doom which "does not leave him even an illusion of liberty" (Mazzini). Man combats his destiny; if he falls, he does so after exhibiting an almost Titanic energy of will. How different this is from the dramas of genuine fatalism! In the dramas of India the actors in no sense rely on their own efforts; their virtue is passive resignation and self-effacement: it is for the gods to cut the knots of the tragedy. In the Greek drama the power of an overruling Destiny is no more subversive of liberty in the case of men than the similar power in Homer is of the liberty of the gods. They are both free, men and gods, but free within certain limits. Outside this circle of freedom there are great unknown forces which hem in man's life and assail it. The more these powers of outward circumstance are magnified, the more impressive is the assertion of human free-will in the struggle against them. This is just what we find in Aeschylus. He is haunted by the feeling of the strange forces which play upon man from without; of the tendencies which per-

petuate themselves in the blood, and link together the generations as if they were a living whole. All the framework in which life was set belonged to a supernatural order, and such facts were together classed as Destiny. It is the element of mystery and the sense of the supernatural that has made Aeschylus sometimes appear more fatalistic than the other Greek poets. The religious view pervades his tragedies ; he is a theologian as much as he is an artist. But his dramas so far from being fatalistic are in truth from end to end a vindication of human freedom.

Returning now to our main point we notice an important distinction between suffering for another and being punished for another. The first is a natural and physical process, a fact proved by experience. The second implies a judicial act—one which, when ascribed to the Deity, is an unauthorised inference from, or interpretation of, a fact. Punishment implies guilt, and the notion of an innocent man being punished for the guilty is a moral contradiction. The innocent man may and does suffer for the guilty ; that he should be punished for the guilty is inconceivable, for guilt and with it moral condemnation are intransferable. To speak, therefore, of *Vicarious Suffering* has



nothing in it to shock morality: *Vicarious Punishment* (if the full meaning of the idea is realised) is immoral. The tragedians show a consciousness of this distinction. The popular view was that guilt was inherited, that is, that the children are punished for their fathers' sins. The view of Aeschylus and of Sophocles also (so far as he touches the problem on this side) was that a tendency towards guilt is inherited, but this tendency does not annihilate man's free-will. If, therefore the children are punished, they are punished for their own sins. But Sophocles saw the further truth, that innocent children may suffer for their fathers' sins.

The purification of this special doctrine of the popular religion, which was effected in Greece by the poets, was effected among the Jews by the prophets. The phrase, "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children," was open to a double interpretation, — either that the children were punished judicially for their fathers' sins, or that the children suffered in the course of nature for their fathers' sins. The Jews for a long time interpreted the words of the second commandment in the first sense, just as the Greeks so interpreted the idea of a curse in the house. But Ezekiel (ch. xviii.), in clearer tones even than the

Greek poets, rejected the first interpretation, and freed the notion of moral responsibility from all ties of blood relationship. "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? . . . . The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." The same truth had occurred early to the mind of India. In the *Ramayana* these striking words occur: "A father, a mother, a son, whether in this world or the next, eats only the fruit of his own works; a father is not recompensed or punished for his son, neither a son for his father. Each of these by his own actions gives birth to good or evil."

The doctrine, then, of the hereditary curse, as it is exhibited in the Greek poets, is not one of fatalism. Remembering the distinction between Vicarious Suffering, which is a natural process, and Vicarious Punishment, which is a penal sentence, we find that the second of these ideas, which alone is fatalistic and immoral, is nowhere to be found,—not in Sophocles any more than in Aeschylus. It was part of the popular creed of Greece which was discarded by the tragedians.

So long as divine justice was believed to assert itself in the earthly life of the individual, it was natural that moral character should be judged by outward happiness, and that guilt and suffering should be inseparably associated. But there comes a time in the history of every people when the old theory of life, that the good always prosper and the bad are punished, has to yield before the stress of facts. Sophocles is the first of the Greeks who has clearly realised that suffering is not always penal, that it has other functions to discharge in the divine economy. The suffering of innocent children for the sins of the fathers, which Sophocles touches lightly, is comprised under the wider law of human suffering, in interpreting which he has made a great step in advance upon Aeschylus. He has penetrated into many aspects and meanings of suffering which were hitherto undiscerned. He stands midway between Aeschylus, who sees in it nothing but the working of retributive justice, and the sceptical theory of the succeeding age, that unmerited suffering is due to carelessness on the part of the gods. Having seized the central truth of the sufferings of the righteous—god-sent visitations, *θεῖαι τύχαι*, not the penalties of sin—

he was able to accept many of the popular legends almost as they stood, and to breathe into them a moral meaning. It is not that there is in him, as some have thought, an incipient severance between morality and religion; that he has receded from the higher ground occupied by Aeschylus and lapsed into popular superstition. Aeschylus, for whom suffering was penal in intention, found in the legends a more intractable material; he was often obliged to remould and transform where Sophocles had merely to interpret anew. Of the primitive elements which Sophocles retains, those only can be held still to savour of popular superstition, which are outside the action of the drama and among the supposed antecedents of the plot. These extraneous parts he is not always at pains to bring under the laws either of morality or of probability.

Undeserved suffering, while it is exhibited in Sophocles under various lights, always appears as part of the permitted evil which is a condition of a just and harmoniously ordered universe. It is foreseen in the counsels of the gods. It may,<sup>1</sup> as in the *Antigone*, serve to vindicate the higher

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. E. Abbott's "Essay on Sophocles" in *Hellenica* (Rivingtons, 1880), p. 58-9.

laws by which the moral government of the world is maintained ; or, as in the *Philoctetes* and *Trachiniae*, to advance a pre-ordained and divine purpose ; or, as in the *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus Coloneus* to educate character. Sophocles deepens the meaning of the Greek proverb, " Man learns by suffering " (παθήματα μαθήματα). He raises it from a prudential or a moral maxim into a religious mystery. He anticipates the faith of Plato,<sup>1</sup> that when a man is beloved of the gods, even poverty, sickness, and other sufferings can turn out only for his good. The *Oedipus Coloneus* affords the most perfect instance of the man whom adversity has sorely tried, and on whom it has had not, indeed, a softening but a chastening and enlightening influence. Though this play was probably composed at a considerably later date than the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and though each play is dramatically complete in itself, yet if we would learn the maturest thought of Sophocles upon the whole theme, we must study the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in the light of the sequel. Oedipus is not, indeed, a perfect character ; he has flaws of temper and judgment ; but not in these must we seek the explanation of his history. The poet indicates

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* x. 613 A.

clearly that his calamities are to be traced to the inherent feebleness and short-sightedness of man, the obverse side of which is the divine foreknowledge ; that his sufferings are in truth unmerited, and for that very reason have no power to subdue the soul. Oedipus has, of his own free-will, committed deeds which would be the most heinous of crimes, had they been done with knowledge. Popular sentiment would have ascribed them to a divine Infatuation, which though inflicted arbitrarily and not as a judicial sentence, yet was supposed to leave the agent responsible for what he did.

Here, as in other plays, Sophocles fixes our attention on the difference between crime and involuntary error. The old belief of the Greeks, as of the Jews, was that an outward act could in itself constitute a crime ; the guilt did not depend on the knowledge or intention of the agent. If pollution was incurred, some ritual expiation was necessary to wipe out the stain. Accidental homicide needed such a cleansing rite no less than voluntary murder. Even the lifeless instruments of a crime, stones or other weapons, had to pass through a purificatory process. Sophocles in the *Oedipus Coloneus* distinguishes between the

inward and the outward quality of an act, between moral and ceremonial purity. In harmony with the religion of Apollo,<sup>1</sup> he discovers that the heart may be pure even where the hands have not been clean. As it is expressed in a fragment of his own: "The unwitting sin makes no man bad."<sup>2</sup> In the eye of religion Oedipus, in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, is still a guilty man. The breach of the divine law leaves a stain, though the offender may have been the unconscious agent of a higher power. But whatever the ritual defilement, there is here moral innocence, and Oedipus himself asserts it. We hardly recognise him now as the man from whom we parted in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in the first transport of horror and remorse. His old fiery temper is indeed still ready to blaze forth. But suffering has wrought on him far otherwise than on Lear, whose weak and passionate nature it unhinged, and with whom the thought that he himself was mainly to blame embittered his anger and turned grief into despair. Oedipus has disencumbered himself of a past which is not truly part of himself. In the school of suffering his inborn nobleness of char-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Soph. *Frag.* 582, ἄκων δ' ἁμαρτῶν οὐ τις ἀνθρώπων κακός.

acter has come out. The long years have taught him resignation.<sup>1</sup> In spite of troubled memories he is at peace with himself and reconciled to heaven. He has read the facts of his past life in another light. He has pondered the ancient oracles of Apollo, which predicted to him at once his doom and his final rest. His inward eye has been purged, and with newly won spiritual insight he thinks of himself as a man set apart by the gods for their own mysterious purposes. He bears himself with the calm and dignity of one who knows that he is obeying their express summons, and has a high destiny to fulfil. The unconscious sin is expiated; and he who was the victim of divine anger, the accursed thing that polluted the city, is now the vehicle of blessing to the land that receives him. A sufferer not a sinner, restored to the favour of the gods, he finds in that favour and in the honours that await him, an ample recompense for all that he has endured—

“Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail,  
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

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<sup>1</sup> *O.C.* 7, στέργειν γὰρ αἱ πάθαι με χῶ χρόνος ξυνῶν | μακρὸς διδάσκει. Cp. *Soph. Frag.* 581, πόλλ' ἐν κακοῖσι θυμὸς εὐνηθεὶς ὀρᾷ.



Both Aeschylus and Sophocles attained to the conception of a righteous order of the world under the sovereign rule of Zeus. Sophocles had not, indeed, the speculative insight of Aeschylus, nor did he grapple so strenuously with the deepest problems of existence. Yet he did not yield the ground won by Aeschylus, or renounce the moral gains that had been bequeathed by him. In one religious idea, as we have seen,—in his interpretation of human suffering,—he even advanced beyond his predecessor. Aeschylus believed in an unseen and guiding Power, that dispenses rewards and punishments to individuals and communities, on principles of unerring justice. In Sophocles the divine righteousness asserts itself not in the award of happiness or misery to the individual, but in the providential wisdom which assigns to each individual his place and function in a universal moral order. Unmerited suffering here receives at least a partial explanation.

## THE MELANCHOLY OF THE GREEKS

WE are commonly inclined to think of the Greeks as a people, and the only people, who for a brief space in the history of mankind looked on the universe with a clear and untroubled spirit; who in the freshness of their powers, and with a finely gifted nature, in which mind and body, heart and intellect, reason and imagination perfectly conspired together, seized life in its wholeness, and drew from it the full measure of rational delight which it is capable of affording. The world of the unseen, though very near to them, did not oppress their imagination. Their gods were not unknown and dimly felt forces, dwelling in forests or in solitary places. Through the race of demigods the people traced back their lineage to the Immortals, who mingled in the open ways of the city, in the streets and market-places, and joined in their feasts and graced their solemn meetings.

The companions of their sports, the partners of their revels, these gods accepted the homage of dance and song. They were members of the same family, elder brothers, who inspired a grave reverence, but no servile fear.

On another side, the Greek, combining the gaiety, the insatiable curiosity of the child with the keen intellect of the grown man, went forth fearlessly to explore each undiscovered region that lay around him and within. The joy of adventure carried him over unknown seas; the spirit of daring speculation led him to investigate the world both of matter and of mind, and to embrace in his theories the ultimate constitution of things. The spectacle of the universe with its puzzles and its contradictions, and of human life with its mingled pleasures and pains, to each of which appeals his quick sympathies readily responded, left the balance of his faculties undisturbed. From his flights of speculation and fancy he came back to the world of action and lived in it as though he had never left it,—shrewd in business, fond of enjoyment, but temperate in his pleasures, scrupulous in the performance of domestic pieties, meeting danger with courage and defeat with resignation. Even in exile he

could find a retreat in the serenity of his own thought. "No Hellene is old," said the Egyptian priest in Plato,<sup>1</sup> "in mind you are all young:" and we like to apply the words to the Greeks in a somewhat different sense from what was intended, and to think of them as of their own victorious athletes, endowed with perpetual youth and gaiety of heart, with radiant limbs and brows unclouded, the inward and outward man being one in the gracious union of intellect and beauty.

But however true this picture may be if regarded in its main outlines, there is another side to it of which we ought to be reminded. It is not difficult to picture to ourselves some of the sombre facts which dashed the joyousness of Greek life in the periods with which we are best acquainted;—the hard and narrow selfishness of the ruling class, the fierce bigotry, the wild revenge of political faction, the sudden reversals of fortune, and the instability of all human affairs. But even if we confine ourselves to literature, and note only the moods and sentiments which are there reflected, we may catch many plaintive tones and some accents even of

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Tim.* 22 B.

despair, which contrast strangely with what is called Hellenic serenity.

A peculiar vein of constitutional sadness belongs to the Greek temperament. We find it already in Homer. In Achilles himself, as in most of the heroes of poetry, there is a tinge of melancholy. His early death is the burden of the *Iliad*. "Doomed art thou to swift death, yea and piteous art thou above all men; in an evil hour I bare thee in our halls:"<sup>1</sup>—so cries Thetis, when at the opening of the *Iliad* she comes at the call of her son; and the same word, ὠκύμορος, is on her lips when, after the death of Patroclus, she again answers the same call;<sup>2</sup> and once more in her prayer to Hephaestus to forge new armour for Achilles she pleads for a son that is "doomed to swift death."<sup>3</sup> From his mother Achilles had learnt that he had the choice between two fates. "If I abide here and besiege the 'Trojans' city, then my returning home is taken from me, but my fame shall be imperishable; but if I go home to my dear native land, my high fame is taken from me, but my life shall endure long while, neither shall the issue of death soon reach me."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* i. 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* xviii. 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Il.* xviii. 458.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* ix. 412-6. Trans. by Leaf, Lang, and Myers.

Before the opening of the *Iliad* the choice has been made. Achilles already knows his doom and accepts it. His one wish is, that seeing that his span of life is brief (*μινυνθάδιόν περ ἔοντα*), it might not be without honour.<sup>1</sup> It is with him as with Hector. The shadow of early death falls across both their paths. "Of a surety," says Hector, "I know this in heart and soul; the day shall come for holy Ilios to be laid low, and Priam and the folk of Priam of the good ashen spear."<sup>2</sup> But not the love of wife or child can make him shrink like a coward from the battle; "seeing I have learnt ever to be valiant and fight in the forefront of the Trojans, winning my father's great glory and mine own."<sup>3</sup>

Still more clearly does Achilles know what is in store for him; and the foreknowledge lends a peculiar pathos to all he says and does. Yet no word escapes him of querulous lament. In his anguish over the death of Patroclus he exclaims: "But bygones will we let be, for all our pain, curbing the heart in our breasts under necessity. Now go I forth, that I may light on the destroyer of him I loved, on Hector: then will I accept my death whensoever Zeus

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* i. 352.<sup>2</sup> *Il.* vi. 447-9.<sup>3</sup> *Il.* vi. 444-6.

willeth to accomplish it and the other immortal gods.”<sup>1</sup> One line sums up the spirit of the man :

“When I am dead I shall lie low ; let me now win high renown.”<sup>2</sup>

To the horse Xanthus, who being endowed with human speech told him of his death-day nigh at hand, he answered : “Xanthus, why prophesiest thou my death ? no wise behoveth it thee. Well know I of myself that it is appointed me to perish here, far from my father dear and mother ; howbeit anyway I will not refrain till I give the Trojans surfeit of war.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, in the great scene where Priam comes to his tent at night and entreats of him the body of Hector, Achilles is softened by the old man’s grief and by his own. He thinks too of his father Peleus to whom the gods gave fortune and wealth, and a bride from among the daughters of the sea. Trouble too they gave, for he “begat one son to an untimely death” (*ἕνα παῖδα τέκεν παναώριον*),<sup>4</sup> a son who may not tend him in old age, but abides far off in Troy land. In this

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xviii. 114-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* xviii. 121, *κείσομ’ ἐπεὶ κε θάνω· νῦν δὲ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀροίμην.*

<sup>3</sup> *Il.* xix. 420-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* xxiv. 540.

memorable speech,<sup>1</sup> however, he rises above the personal sorrow to the height of human pity, and draws a picture never yet surpassed of human destiny, of the "lot the gods have spun for miserable men."

The strain of sadness in Achilles, that here finds its fullest utterance, is a characteristic example of Homer's melancholy. It is large, human, universal. "Even as are the generations of leaves such are those likewise of men; the leaves that the wind scattereth to earth, and the forest budding putteth forth another growth, and the new leaves come on in the spring-tide; so of the generations of men one putteth forth its bloom and another passeth away."<sup>2</sup> These words, the first conscious sigh over the mortality of man that is found in Greek poetry, were spoken by Glaucus to Diomedes when the two warriors met in single combat; and again and again in Homer, above the din of battle and the triumph of the victor, is heard the voice of human tenderness, the pathos of suffering. All distinctions are effaced; Greeks and Trojans, friends and foes, are confounded in the deep compassion which the poet feels for the woes and tears of humanity.

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xxiv. 518-551.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* vi. 146-9.



But the melancholy of Homer is more akin to the melancholy of youth than of mature age. The mood of sadness follows close upon other moments when the pleasure of existence and the vision of the world's beauty have penetrated and possessed the mind. The two moods are in their nature not so far apart, and by natural reaction pass each into the other. Both spring out of unlimited aspiration, out of a deep thirst and capacity for joy. With riper years the discovery of the disproportion which must always exist between desire and achievement, brings with it a kindly acquiescence in much that is imperfect. The heroic aim of the Homeric men has not yet been brought down to the level of the actual. Still farther are we from the period of middle-aged pessimism when ideals are shattered and all that life offers has been found wanting. But while the poetic melancholy of the early Greek world is not unconnected with the high hopes of youth, to whose untried faculties every effort is in itself a delight, the similarity between the two forms of melancholy is only partial. Youthful melancholy is fantastic and egoistic. It lives in a world of its own and everywhere sees its own image reflected. It is a world of bright day-dreams which melt

away and again re-form. When the fabric of hope is dissolved, youth is apt to rebel against the conditions of existence. And even apart from such disappointment, there are seasons when the pain of living becomes almost too keen to be borne; no precise reason can be assigned; it is an instinctive feeling. The melancholy of Homer is free from these fantastic elements. Illusion and disillusion do not succeed one another. With the freshness of youthful life and its boundless capacity of action is combined the quiet and calm gaze of long experience, the "eye that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."

But however great is the pathos and tenderness of Homer, he is free from the feeling that death after all is better than life. In the description of the future life in the eleventh *Odyssey* it is the suggestion of lost happiness that brings out in striking relief the pathos of earthly existence. The underworld of Homer is a meagre and ill-furnished world situated at the limits of the far west in a region of perpetual twilight. The life of its inhabitants is a pale image of what they did on earth. Orion, a phantom hunter, chases phantom beasts,—the ghosts of "the very beasts that he himself had slain on the lonely hills." Minos still sits in

judgment and holds a spectral tribunal. There is an automatic mimicry of the activities of the upper world. The one reality is the reality of torment. A few great criminals, who have attempted to overpass the limits of existence and to encroach on the divine prerogative, are visited with a punishment consisting in aimless effort or unsatisfied desire. Hades himself is the "hated of the gods," and the souls go down to him lamenting. His land is desolate of joy, tenanted by "strengthless heads," "phantoms of men outworn." "Rather," says Achilles, "would I live above ground as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed."<sup>1</sup>

Another and more modern phase of melancholy is not slow to find expression in Greek poetry. In Mimnermus, who wrote in the middle of the seventh century B.C., we see the Greek spirit aged, as it were, before its day. The few fragments of him that have been preserved are all written in one strain. His theme is the fleeting delights of youth, that passes away like a dream, and old age, loveless and joyless, "hateful to children, scorned by women," which "makes beauty and

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* xi. 489-91.

ugliness to be alike," and "in the sunlight find no pleasure." He moralises sadly upon life; and while his tone is one of reflective resignation, the conclusion to which he points is that man's wisdom is to snatch the pleasures of the hour. He takes as his text the Homeric lines quoted above (p. 136)—

οὔτε περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίγδ' ἀνδρῶν, κ.τ.λ.

lines which are among the favourite reminiscences of the elegiac poets,—and expands the idea; but how far has he travelled from the simple thought of Homer! "We are like leaves which the flowering spring-time brings forth, when of a sudden they grow beneath the rays of the sun; for a span so brief do we rejoice in the flowers of youth, knowing nothing, neither good nor evil, from the gods. But the black fates stand by, the one with the doom of doleful age, the other with the doom of death; and for a little space the fruit of youth continues, during one day's sunshine on the earth. But when once the appointed time of youth is passed, better to die forthwith than to live."<sup>1</sup>

Theognis, too, who lived nearly a century later, is, like Mimnermus, a practical Epicurean: "I

<sup>1</sup> Mimnerm. *Frag.* 2.

rejoice and disport me in my youth ; long enough  
 • beneath the earth shall I lie, bereft of life, voice-  
 less as a stone, and shall leave the loved sunlight ;  
 good man though I am, then shall I see nothing  
 any more.”<sup>1</sup> “ Rejoice, O my soul, in thy youth ;  
 soon shall other men be in life, and I shall be  
 black earth in death.”<sup>2</sup> “ After my death I crave  
 not to be laid upon a royal couch ; nay, in life  
 may some luck be mine. Briars for the dead  
 man are as coverlets strewn over him. What if  
 the bed be hard or soft ? ”<sup>3</sup> Life has not gone so  
 smoothly with Theognis as with Mimnermus. He  
 has been engaged in the political struggles of his  
 own city Megara, and is the victim of social  
 revolution ; he has been in exile, has lost his  
 fortune, has been deserted by friends : he knows  
 what it is to have the spirit tongue-tied, to be  
 broken and enslaved by poverty.<sup>4</sup> And, though  
 now again he is restored to his country, an accent  
 of personal emotion, a sharp sense of wrong,  
 vibrates through his verses, and with it there is a  
 passionate longing to be avenged and “ to drink  
 the black blood ” of his enemies.<sup>5</sup> He looks out  
 upon the world and sees everywhere a reign of

<sup>1</sup> Theogn. 567-70.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 877-8.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1191-4.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 177-8.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 349.

lawlessness and violence. "Shame has perished ; shamelessness and outrage have conquered justice, and prevail throughout the world."<sup>1</sup> The greed of wealth has levelled all distinctions of birth and blood ;<sup>2</sup> "those who once were noble now are base, and the base in turn are noble."<sup>3</sup> Seeing that it avails nothing to be just let a man be cunning and shifty, and imitate the polypus which takes the colour of the rock to which he clings.<sup>4</sup> The cry which escapes him—

ὄλβιος οὐδεὶς  
ἀνθρώπων, ὁπόσους ἥελιος καθορᾷ,<sup>5</sup>

"No mortal is happy of all on whom the sun looks down," is a more genuine lamentation than is often conveyed by these well-worn words in the Greek poets. His despair reaches its height in the famous lines whose echoes lived long in Greek literature : "It is best of all things for the children of men not to be born, nor to see the rays of the keen sunlight ; but if born, to pass as soon as may be the gates of Hades, and to lie beneath a covering of much earth."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Theogn. 291-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 190.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1109-10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 215-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 167-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 425-8. Cp. Ecclesiastes iv. 2, 3, "I praised the dead who are dead, more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been."

Yet Theognis with studied self-control teaches the wisdom which he has learnt as a child,<sup>1</sup> and endeavours to guide the friend whom he addresses in the ancient ways. The thoughts of man's heart are vain ; he knows nothing of the issue whether for good or evil, for the gods ordain all things as they will.<sup>2</sup> Man must humble himself before the gods and take cheerfully the evil things of life as well as the good.<sup>3</sup> Yet now and again while repeating the maxims of piety he suddenly breaks off, overcome by the thought of the sufferings of the righteous ; he turns to Zeus and charges him with injustice in his government of the world in language almost as bold as that of the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, or of the book of Job : " Zeus, lord beloved, I marvel at thee ; for thou reignest over all ; thine is honour and great power, and thou knowest the very heart and spirit of each man, for thy might, O king, is supreme. How then, son of Cronos, can thy soul endure to hold in like regard the sinner and the righteous ? . . . Heaven has given to mortals no clear token, nor shown the way by which if a man walk he may please the Immortals. Howbeit the wicked prosper and are free from trouble, while those who keep their soul

<sup>1</sup> Theogn. 27-8.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 133-142.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 335-8.

from base deeds, although they love justice have for their portion poverty,—poverty mother of helplessness, which tempts the mind of man to transgression, and by a cruel constraint mars the reason in his breast.”<sup>1</sup>

Solon had consoled himself with the reflection that the works of outrage are not lasting; that Zeus surveys the end, and that of a sudden his vengeance bursts forth, like a wind in spring time scattering the clouds. Sooner or later it falls, if not on the guilty man himself, on his children and on their posterity after them.<sup>2</sup> Theognis finds no comfort in this thought; rather it heightens the wrong of which he complains. He prays to Zeus that it may be the will of the blessed gods to redress this injustice, that the guilty one may not escape while another bears the penalty, and that the sins of the father may not be visited on the sons. As it is, he asks, how can any one, who beholds the afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the unjust, henceforth revere the Immortals?<sup>3</sup> Theognis comes as near as a Greek of the earlier time well can come to being a pessimist. At bottom he has a profound convic-

<sup>1</sup> Theogn. 373-386.

<sup>2</sup> Solon, *Frag.* 13. [4.] 14-32.

<sup>3</sup> Theogn. 731-52.



tion, born probably of bitter and personal disappointment, that the world as now ordered is all wrong. He appeals to Zeus to right it; he does not indeed discard the moral precepts and traditional beliefs of his countrymen, but behind these phrases there is no real assurance that the goodness of Zeus is equal to his power: there is little hope that the contradictions which present themselves to the reason will ever be removed.

We pass from Theognis to another and immeasurably greater poet, Pindar, who also felt profoundly the sadness of human destiny, but expressed the feeling in a truly Hellenic spirit. The mortality of man, which to us has become a commonplace of religion or morality, inspired some of the simplest and noblest verses in Greek literature. "Creatures of a day, what are we, what are we not? Man is but a dream of a shadow" (*σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἀνθρώπου*), says Pindar<sup>1</sup> in an ode which a scholiast calls "a lamentation upon human life." "The dream of a shadow,"—that is the starting-point of Pindar's meditations upon man and his destiny. Man, a thing of nought, is not of the lineage of the gods,<sup>2</sup> who know neither wear-

<sup>1</sup> *Pyth.* viii. 95. Trans. by E. Myers.

<sup>2</sup> *Nem.* vi. 1-4.

ness nor sickness nor old age ;<sup>1</sup> who can speedily accomplish all that they resolve, who can turn darkness to light and light to darkness ;<sup>2</sup> from whom no mortal deed is hidden.<sup>3</sup> But as for men, the gods deal to them two evils for one good ;<sup>4</sup> their delight grows up apace, but as quickly it falls again to earth.<sup>5</sup> Errors unnumbered float around their thought.<sup>6</sup>

Yet man, frail and feeble, has a light that springs from him in the darkness. "When a glory from God hath shined on him a clear light abideth upon him, and serene life."<sup>7</sup> He wins to his side Fortune, not the fickle goddess, who with closed eyes distributes her bounties, and raises men up only to cast them down, but Fortune, the Saviour (τύχη Σώτειρα),<sup>8</sup> who works in harmony with the moral powers which sustain the world. Thus the "short-lived race of man" (τὸ ταχύποτμον ἀνέρων ἔθνος)<sup>9</sup> may struggle and do battle for what is noble.<sup>10</sup> "Never indeed shall man climb the brazen heaven,"<sup>11</sup> yet he has in him some likeness to the Immortals.<sup>12</sup> Youth, beauty, victorious

<sup>1</sup> *Frag. Inc.* 120 [127]. Bergk.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 119 [106].

<sup>3</sup> *Ol.* i. 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Pyth.* iii. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* viii. 92-4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ol.* vii. 24-5.

<sup>7</sup> *Pyth.* viii. 96-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ol.* xii. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.* i. 66.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.* v. 15 ; cp. *Nem.* v. 47.

<sup>11</sup> *Pyth.* x. 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Nem.* vi. 4.

strength, fair deeds made immortal by song,—these are God-given gifts and in these the crown of human glory is attained. But the just man only is beloved of the gods; in life he is under their protection, and in death too a new hope is given him. Perpetual sunlight has arisen upon the realm of the shades; fair meadow-lands bloom where Homer knew only of barren trees that shed their fruit. A more full and conscious existence opens out after death, and the world below is brought into moral relation with the life on earth.<sup>1</sup> Pindar's vein of meditation is free from despair or pessimism. His austere melancholy has nothing in it that is unmanly. He remains a Hellene of the Hellenes. The singer of the games, the poet of a privileged race of athletes, who by birth and wealth and native faculty were able to rise to the level of heroic achievement, he is not forgetful of the vanity of human hopes, of man's nothingness and entire dependence on the gods.

The impressions made on the greater poets by the contemplation of life have their counterpart in the writings of the historians. For, in truth, the facts of Greek history were instinct

<sup>1</sup> *Ol.* ii. 53-83, *Frag.* 106 [95], 108 [96].

with poetry. As the poetry of Greece was more historical than that of any other people, so too its history was more poetical. Already to a Greek of the fifth century B.C. the law of moral retribution was written legibly on the page of the past. Events had unfolded themselves with startling rapidity ; signal catastrophes gave emphasis to what was happening ; causes and effects, which in a more complicated modern society are hard to disentangle, stood out in their clear meaning and their inevitable issues. In a single century, 620 to 520 B.C., five great empires—Assyria, Media, Babylonia, Lydia, Egypt,—had passed away with every circumstance of dramatic impressiveness ; a still shorter period had witnessed the rise and fall of the Tyrannies in Greece. In an age when the despot of to-day might to-morrow be an exile, when the triumph of political party meant frequently not only loss of power and place, but of home and property, and, it might be, of life for the vanquished,—at such a time the poet and the historian could draw from a common inspiration. Greek history was a living witness to the deeper laws which govern human action : Greek tragedy became an epitome of the lessons of Greek history, the

facts of the mythical past being read in the light of contemporary reflection.

Dramatic surprises and a Divine Irony in the ordering of events—these were the great ideas common to Herodotus (in some measure even to Thucydides) and the tragedians. In applying these ideas to life marked discrepancies of thought and treatment are apparent. But in all alike great disasters are seen to follow close upon insolent success; man's fancied security is the prelude to his fall. Like Aeschylus, Herodotus looks behind the natural causes of events and finds a divine hand that guides them. The gods are guardians of right: crime brings its sure penalties: its consequences extend to generations yet unborn. The connection between sin and suffering, which in Aeschylus is exhibited in the hereditary doom of certain families, Herodotus traces on the larger stage of the world's history and in the life of nations. While he thus resembles Aeschylus as the exponent of the law of Nemesis, he also recalls Sophocles in the recurring thought of the briefness of the individual life and the insecurity of mortal happiness. Few and evil are the days of man's existence, he lives in a vain shadow, unable to forecast his

future, and feeding upon idle hopes. In the hour when he seems to have attained, failure and catastrophe are already at hand. One last pain there is even worse than ignorance,—to unite perfect knowledge with perfect helplessness.<sup>1</sup>

It may appear a paradox to speak of the melancholy of Herodotus ; and indeed it would be so if the word is taken to imply a gloomy or pessimistic temperament. His history overflows with natural gaiety. He has moreover a reasoned confidence in the general ordering of human affairs ; and as he relates the great deeds of his race in the overthrow of the armies of Persia, his heart, as a Hellene, glows with pride. Still there is in him a strain of austere and resigned melancholy, a side of his character which is not out of keeping with his joy-loving nature. Almost at the opening of his history he writes as one who has read the story of human vicissitudes and has been a close spectator of existence. There is a tone of grave reflection in the words : “ I will tell of the cities of men, small as well as great ; for those which once were great have for the most part become small ; and those which in my time were great were small of old. Knowing

<sup>1</sup> Her. ix. 16, *πολλὰ φρονέοντα μηδενὸς κρατεῖν*.

then that human prosperity never continues in one stay, I shall make mention of things small and great alike.”<sup>1</sup> When he tells of the tears of Xerxes, as from his throne at Abydos he watched his countless hosts passing into Europe, and reflected that in a hundred years not one of those multitudes would be living, we feel that these are the very tears that Greek tragedy evokes, this is the tragic pity or ἔλεος, which in the woes of the individual laments the universal human destiny. In a similar strain of profound compassion the chorus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on finding out the secret of Oedipus’ birth, exclaims, “Alas, ye generations of men, how mere a shadow do I count your life. Where, where is the mortal who wins more of happiness than just the seeming, and after the semblance a falling away?”<sup>2</sup>

This, which is the dominant mood of Sophocles, is heard as an undertone throughout the narrative of Herodotus. It is but rarely put into so many words, but when it does find utterance it is in accents that betray a profound disquiet, of which Sophocles knows nothing. Sophocles was able to look on the world in the resigned temper of

<sup>1</sup> Her. i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Soph. *O. T.* 1186-1192. Trans. by R. C. Jebb.

religious faith, and to see its contradictions reconciled in a moral harmony, by a supreme and righteous will, which has regard even for the individual life. Herodotus trusts indeed in the general course of providence, but for him there are still unharmonised forces in the universe, which assail human happiness. A jealous power gives to man a taste of the sweets of life only to withdraw the cup from his lips. So full of trouble is life that death is the most acceptable refuge from its ills. "Short as our life is," said the Persian Artabanus to Xerxes, "there is no mortal so happy that he will not many times, and not once only, have occasion to wish that he were dead rather than alive."<sup>1</sup>

Yet Herodotus is neither despairing nor defiant. His attitude of practical piety is not very different from that of Sophocles. From the facts of life poet and historian alike draw the same lesson, that a mortal man must not strive to rise above mortal estate, but must bear humbly the lot that is decreed for him. In Herodotus too there are already hints of the thought concisely expressed in the saying of Heraclitus, "It is not well for man to have all his wishes granted,"—

<sup>1</sup> Her. vii. 46.



(ἀνθρώποισι γίνεσθαι ὅκόσα θέλουνσι οὐκ ἄμεινον),  
 —a thought more fully developed by Sophocles. Man does not know his own true good; what seems to be his ruin may be his saving; for there are divine-sent visitations which reveal a providential purpose. Croesus, the deposed monarch, learns a wisdom hidden from him in prosperity; not Oedipus, the king, who solved the riddle of the Sphinx, but Oedipus, the blind man and the wanderer, is admitted to the secrets of the gods. Of all boons death itself may be the best, as for the two Argive youths, Cleobis and Biton, who drew their mother to the temple of Hera, and when in sight of all the people she had prayed to the goddess to grant them the best thing which man can receive, they fell asleep and rose no more.<sup>1</sup>

The abiding sense of man's helplessness and of the mystery of his fate accounts for the peculiar tone in which Hope is spoken of in Greek literature. There is one notable exception in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus. The "blind hopes" which Prometheus planted in men's minds helped them to emerge out of a feeble and grovelling life, and to rise above the thought of death.

<sup>1</sup> Her. i. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Prom.* 248-251.

Other rare examples may be found of Hope in this happier aspect.<sup>1</sup> But it is more commonly pictured as a flattering phantom, an illusion born of an uncertain future. It is a mocking goddess who tempts men to forget the limits of the possible. It is the consolation of the weak, whom it lures to folly; it is not a spur to progress nor the sustenance of the strong. In Hesiod, when the lid was removed from Pandora's jar, and the other myriad evils which it contained flew abroad, till "the earth was full of woes and full also the sea,"<sup>2</sup> Hope alone remained at the bottom,—itself, too, part of the deadly gift of the goddess. In Theognis Hope and Peril stand near to one another, both of them dangerous deities to man.<sup>3</sup> In Pindar "up and down the hopes of men are tossed, as they cleave the waves of baffling falsity."<sup>4</sup> "By untamable hope our bodies are enthralled; but the tides of our affairs are hidden from our foreknowledge."<sup>5</sup> To Pindar also the saying is by some ascribed: "Hopes are the dreams of waking men."<sup>6</sup> In Simonides of Amorgos it is Hope that supports man in his

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Eur. *Herc. Fur.* 105-6. Theogn. 1135-46. Dem. *de Cor.* § 97. The phrase ἀγαθὴ ἐλπὶς has often a special reference to hopes after death. <sup>2</sup> Hes. *Works and Days*, 96-101. <sup>3</sup> Theogn. 637-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ol.* xii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Nem.* xi. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Stob. iii. 12.

vain endeavours after the unattainable ; meanwhile old age, disease, and death overtake him.<sup>1</sup> In Thucydides Hope is the strength of the desperate and is contrasted with the foresight which comes of reason.<sup>2</sup> Once more, it is the ruinous adviser, the spendthrift counsellor who prompts men to stake their all, and is detected only when all has been lost ;<sup>3</sup> a sentiment placed with characteristic dramatic effect in the mouth of the Athenians just before the Sicilian expedition, in which the contrast between the hope and the fulfilment reaches to the height of tragic irony. In the *Greek Anthology* Hope and Fortune are two companion goddesses who make a sport of human life. The future indeed hung like a heavy cloud over the ancient world, charged with catastrophes, reversals of fortune, the wreck of states, the breaking up of homes, exile and death. In the face of these uncertainties the virtue of the Greeks was Resignation rather than Hope, a cheerful acceptance (στέργειν) of the gods' will, without any joyful or assured anticipations.

In Greek authors of classical times there is no trace of the thought that the human race as a

<sup>1</sup> Simon. *Amorg. Frag.* 1 (Bergk).      <sup>2</sup> Thuc. ii. 62, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* v. 103.

whole, or any single people, is advancing towards a divinely appointed goal; there is nothing of what the moderns mean by the "Education of the World," "the Progress of the Race," "the Divine guidance of nations." The first germ of the thought is in Polybius (*circ.* 204-122 B.C.), whose work illustrates the idea of a providential destiny presiding over the march of Roman history, and building up the imperial power of Rome for the good of mankind. Diodorus Siculus, again (*circ.* 59 B.C.), speaks of the gratitude due to those historians who, seeing men bound together by natural kinship but separated in place and time, have attempted to bring them together in one ordered whole (*ὑπὸ μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν σύνταξιν ἀγαγεῖν*), therein making themselves the ministers of Divine Providence (*ὥσπερ τινὲς ὑπουργοὶ τῆς θείας προνοίας γεννηθέντες*).<sup>1</sup> The notion of a universal history is here based on the sentiment of the unity of the human race and of its hopes for the future.

Greek thought turned mainly to the past. The Greek orators and political writers drew their inspiration either from mythical heroes or from the achievements of their ancestors. The

<sup>1</sup> Diodor. Sic. i. 1.

Utopias sketched in the comic fragments, the βίος ἀρχαῖος or primitive life of innocence, were placed in a far-off golden age, and consisted in the simple bliss of barbarism. Philosophy, too, was in Aristotle's phrase "fond of myth;"<sup>1</sup> it sought out ancient traditions, the fragments (οἶον λεύανα) of forgotten learning;<sup>2</sup> for, as he maintained, all the arts and sciences have been found and lost again not once but an infinite number of times already.<sup>3</sup> Greek political ideals reflect the prevalent distrust of the future. Plato indeed did not share Aristotle's disbelief in continuous progress; none the less he is well nigh hopeless for the mass of mankind. Deeply corrupt in all its parts, society does what it can to debase the noblest of its members. The only chance of regenerating it lies in subjecting it to the rule of the philosophers, but hitherto it has listened only to those who have humoured its appetites.

In the absence of Hope and of an ideal of progress, we strike upon one great difference between the classical Greeks and the Hebrews. Not that the history of the Hebrews was one of

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Met.* i. 2. 982 b 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Met.* xi. 8. 1074 b 10-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Pol.* ii. 5. 1264 a 1-5. iv. (vii.) 10. 1329 b 25-7. *de Caelo* i. 3. 270 b 16-20.

progressive expansion and orderly development. It was so in a far less degree than that of the Hellenes, being in truth a long record of ever-recurring rebellions and late repentances. The nation was of all others the most full of inner contradictions; the higher and the lower self were never reconciled. Yet in the darkest hour of adversity the Prophets did not despair of Israel. When Jerusalem was desolate, when the people was in captivity, and national existence had been crushed, the voice of prophecy speaks out the more confidently. It points back to the divine guidance that had watched over the race, and tells of the mighty destiny that was in store for Israel. Through the prophets an ideal and glorified national sentiment was created, transcending local limits, and intertwined with the highest hopes that could be conceived for humanity. They looked to a spiritual restoration and triumph, which should be for the world at large the beginning of a glorious future. This ideal, ardently desired, possessed the mind of the pious Jew; it fed in him a secret fund of joy, and kept alive a spark of hope in a world of spiritual despair against the day when He who was "the Desire of all nations" should come.

I shall not attempt to touch even briefly on all the phases of melancholy that may be discovered in Greek literature ; we are dealing merely with a few typical authors. But a word must still be said about those exquisite gems of verse which are contained in the *Greek Anthology*.<sup>1</sup> Many moods are there reflected. The lines are sometimes bright and playful, sometimes pathetic, sometimes cynical, always graceful. But the motto which is written on the pages as a whole is the same as that of the book of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of Vanities," *ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων*, and the dominant note of sadness deepens the farther we follow the poems into Roman times. "All is laughter, all is ashes, all is nothingness."<sup>2</sup> "Weeping I was born, having wept my fill I die : tears in plenty have I found through life."<sup>3</sup> "Naked I came upon earth, naked shall I go below ; why then do I toil in vain ; seeing that the end is nakedness ?"<sup>4</sup> "Life is the plaything of Fortune, a piteous thing, a wanderer, tossed to and fro between poverty and wealth."<sup>5</sup> Herodotus (v. 4) tells us of a Thracian tribe, whose custom it was

<sup>1</sup> A very interesting edition of Select Epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* has been brought out by J. W. Mackail. (Longmans, 1890.)

<sup>2</sup> *Anth. Pal.* x. 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* x. 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* x. 58.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* x. 80.

to wail over the birth of a child, and to bury the dead with festive joy, as being released from their troubles. "Let us praise the Thracians," says a writer in the *Anthology*,<sup>1</sup> "in that they mourn for their sons as they come forth from their mother's womb into the sunlight, while those again they count blessed who have left life, snatched away by unseen Doom, the servant of the Fates." One who had looked upon the course of the world and the treacherous ways of fortune is forced to exclaim: "I hate the world for its mystery" (*μισῶ τὰ πάντα τῆς ἀδηλίας χάριν*).<sup>2</sup>

In such a world how should man order his life? The answers are various, but may be resolved mainly into two,—the choice being tersely put thus: "The world is all a stage, life is a sport: away with earnest and learn to play the game, or bear thy pains."<sup>3</sup> "To play the game" means to drain the cup of pleasure, though death, lurking in the chalice, embitters the dregs. "Nay, come prepare me the joyous stream of Bacchus, for that

<sup>1</sup> *Anth. Pal.* ix, 111. Cp. *Eur. Frag. Cresphontes* 452 (Nauck)—  
 ἐχρῆν γὰρ ἡμᾶς σύλλογον ποιουμένους  
 τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν εἰς ὃς' ἔρχεται κακά,  
 τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα καὶ πόνων πεπαυμένον  
 χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* x. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* x. 72.



is the antidote of ills,"—forms the conclusion to an epigram which begins by asking, "How was I born? whence am I? wherefore came I hither? To go hence again."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, to refuse to play the game is to rebel against life, either by way of cynical protest or of sullen submission; and the end would be an early escape from life, if only there might be an escape without dying. To be and not to be, however, are both equally distasteful to the true pessimist; he hates the one, he shrinks from the other. Accordingly we find many exhortations in the *Anthology* (e.g. x. 69) not to fear death, which gives peace, which brings release from sickness and the pains of poverty, which comes once and never comes again.

The minds of nobler temper in the *Anthology* suffer from something akin to the modern "Weltschmerz," a feeling in which the mystery of life and the sense of the infinite mingle with personal weariness or satiety. Such poets console themselves by singing in charming verse of graves and ruins; of the fallen grandeur of ancient cities,—Troy, Mycenae, Argos, Sparta, Corinth; they dwell on the sorrow of remembered happiness, and linger over an ideal or vanished past. In the

<sup>1</sup> *Anth. Pal.* x. 118.

outer world they find a counterpart to their own moods, or more often still they hear a discord. The placid existence of the cicada or some other member of the animal creation is set off against the restless discontent of man. The sentiment of melancholy blends with a new and almost modern appreciation of Nature. Her unchanging majesty is contrasted with man's transient and unquiet energies; to Nature the poet turns for support and sympathy. The only sights worth seeing are the larger aspects of the universe around us. "Pleasant are the fair things of Nature,—earth, sea, stars, the orbs of moon and sun. All else is fearfulness and pain."<sup>1</sup>

If it is true, as Aristotle says,<sup>2</sup> that men of genius are of a melancholy temperament, it is but natural that the most highly gifted nation of antiquity should have had in it a vein of this sentiment. But we must not lose sight of the

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the splendid lines of Menander, Ὑποβολιμαῖος, *Frag.* 2—

τοῦτον εὐτυχέστατον λέγω,  
 ὅστις θεωρήσας ἀλύπως, Παρμένων,  
 τὰ σεμνὰ ταῦτ' ἀπῆλθεν, ὅθεν ἦλθεν, ταχύ,  
 τὸν ἥλιον τὸν κοινόν, ἄστρ', ὕδωρ, νέφη,  
 πῦρ· ταῦτα, κὰν ἑκατὸν ἔτη βιώσ, ἀεὶ  
 ὄψει παρόντα, κὰν ἐνιαυτοὺς σφόδρ' ὀλίγους,  
 σεμνότερα τούτων ἕτερα δ' οὐκ ὄψει ποτέ.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Probl.* xxx. 953 a 10 sqq.

distinction between the sadness, which runs as an under-current of thought through the great Greek writers, and the weariness of living which proclaims itself in the graceful and fugitive utterances of the *Anthology*. Of the various forms of pessimism which we know from literature or life, one form is resigned, so long as its daily allowance of pleasure is not withheld. There is another kind that is scornful, rebellious, imperious in its demands. Examples of both may be found in the *Anthology*. The older writers with rare exceptions are strangers to both moods. They wait indeed "to see the end"; they will "call no man happy before he dies." Their melancholy is very real, but there is no parade of melancholy. They are not like the "young gentlemen of France," of whom Shakespeare tells, "as sad as night only for wantonness." Theirs is the same stately and reserved pathos which is depicted on Attic tombstones; the same sadness which penetrates us, when we read in their austere simplicity the last greetings addressed by the tragic heroes to the sunlight and to their homes. The genuine Hellene was touched with a profound pity for the wretchedness of man. Death and fate formed a dark background to his brilliant vision of the universe. Yet without consolation

here or hope hereafter he could face his inexorable doom, and by great thoughts and deeds conquer destiny. In the modern world the contradiction between boundless aspiration and limited powers is apt to paralyse high effort. In classical Greek antiquity the sense of man's feebleness heightens his energy of will. The impression left on us is altogether unique in character, and, as a result, the pathetic in Greek poetry is often not far removed from the sublime. "There is nothing, methinks, more piteous than a man, of all things that creep and breathe upon the earth,"<sup>1</sup>—these words are uttered by Zeus in the *Iliad*, and the thought is typically Hellenic. But no less Hellenic is the rousing call of Sarpedon to Glaucus: "Ah, friend, if once escaped from this battle we were for ever to be ageless and immortal, neither would I fight myself in the foremost ranks, nor would I send thee into the war that giveth men renown, but now—for assuredly ten thousand fates of death do every way beset us, and these no mortal may escape nor avoid—now let us go forward, whether we shall give glory to other men, or others to us."<sup>2</sup> The dark destiny of man is here the very motive which prompts to heroism.

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xvii. 446-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* xii. 322-8.

The thought is the same as that of Pindar : " Forasmuch as men must die, wherefore should one sit vainly in the dark through a dull and nameless age, and without lot in noble deeds ? " <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pind. *Ol.* i. 82-4.

## THE WRITTEN AND THE SPOKEN WORD<sup>1</sup>

THE people which of all others has done most for the intellectual progress of the race, whose literature more than once has roused the Western world by the shock of new ideas from lethargy to mental activity, knew but little of books, and looked with some suspicion on writing as of doubtful value for awakening thought. Almost everything, indeed, was to the Greeks worth knowing, but the things most worth knowing they could get best, as they imagined, from the lips of their fellow-men. Of none of them was the remark true which one modern scholar made about another, "that he had read himself into ignorance." In our own day protests have now and then been heard against the mere reading man, the book-worm who values books as such,

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered to the Dialectic Society, University of Glasgow, Nov. 28, 1884.

not so far as they express and interpret to us the truth of life and the thought of men, but with a superstitious reverence for the printed page. Such a protest was tacitly entertained, though not so often expressed, in ancient Greece against the lifeless symbols of writing, the dead letter as opposed to the quickening and responsive energy of oral intercourse, where each sense and faculty—eye and ear and brain—are acting together in busy co-operation and rivalry, each eliciting, stimulating, and supplementing the other.

With us silent reading has superseded many of the social gatherings of friends, and the art of conversation has been falling into disuse. Political speeches from the platform, which, while they fulfil their proper purpose, serve also as a dramatic entertainment and satisfy the combative instincts of mankind, are an influence which, so far from decreasing, gathers fresh force every day. But the influence of speech in other forms is on the decline compared with that of writing. We accept it as a commonplace that in the modern world the invention whose effects have been most far reaching is the invention of printing. But we sometimes forget that the ancient world made

a still greater discovery,—the art of writing. The transition from the Spoken to the Written Word was more startling to the imagination, more revolutionary in its consequences, than the transition from the Written Word to the Printed Page.

I would ask you now to look at the reception which the Greeks, the most keen-witted and original people of antiquity, gave to this great discovery. It was indeed a cold reception, very unlike what might have been expected. Curious as they were to find out and to tell all that their neighbours knew or did, quick to borrow and adapt the ideas of others, they were yet slow to appreciate the full value and significance of this one art. For centuries they employed it, not as a vehicle of thought, but almost wholly for memorial purposes, such as registering treaties and commercial contracts, preserving the names of Olympian victors, fixing boundaries, and the like. Engrossed in poetic legend and mythology, they evinced little desire to transmit the memory of passing events even when these events were of commanding interest. It was the opening of a new era both for historical research and for literature, when Herodotus wrote a history whose



inspiring motive was the desire "that neither the deeds of men may fade from memory by lapse of time, nor the mighty and marvellous works wrought partly by Hellenes, partly by Barbarians, may lose their renown."<sup>1</sup> Nor did the early Hellenes trouble themselves with strict chronology. Their historical records were drawn up by the temple-priests, and, in the edifying lessons they contained, bore the impress of their origin. A historic sense was slowly developed. Even after writing had come into general use, the Greeks still thought of it as imported from abroad, and spoke of the alphabet as "Phoenician symbols." They had, in short, no natural turn for learning their letters; and their early inaptitude for reading and writing may be traced down to a late period in their ignorance of foreign alphabets and neglect of foreign literature.

A large measure of the suspicion with which they regarded the written word was, perhaps, due to the manner in which written symbols came to them. Contrast their case with that of the Egyptians. The signs that the Egyptians employed on their monuments were not mere symbols of sounds, but the images of the objects

<sup>1</sup> Herod. i. 1.

for which they stood. If the Greeks, like the Egyptians, had gone through this process of ideography, writing would, like speaking, have been a sort of art, and therefore held in reverence; it would have been natural, not conventional, and the connection and even equivalence of the word spoken and the word written would have been manifest. Between words and ideas a necessary connection was held to exist by one school of Greek thinkers. Names were supposed to be the exact counterpart, vocal imitations, of the things they represented. The correspondence was complete between sound and sense. But though the theory of *picture-sounds* as an expression of thought was often discussed, it never occurred to the Greeks that writing itself might have come from *picture-signs*, which were originally an artistic imitation of the objects. They had received from the Phoenicians a set of ready-made symbols, a conventionalised script, whose meaning was not easily discernible, whose use was mechanical, and whose associations were at first almost purely commercial. Written characters were therefore for them stamped from the outset with the mark of utilitarianism, and were as far removed from art as possible.

The severance, however, between writing and the fine arts—beneficent as it was from the artistic point of view, and no less so from the point of view of convenience—was unhappy for the *prestige* of writing, which was long regarded by the Greeks as mechanical, symbolic, almost cabalistic. They dissociated from it the notion of organic beauty and artistic form. Now, as artists they disliked all mere routine, all work that was purely mechanical. The free inspiration of the poet was checked by the use of conventional symbols; the epic and the drama depended, if not for their very existence, at least for their vitality, on the living voice and on listening crowds. Add to this the fact that poetry, with its musical accompaniments, could be carried in the memory without external aids and appliances.

But it was not alone the artistic instinct of the Greeks that made them look with some suspicion upon writing. In conduct, too, they shrank from formulae. Unvarying rules petrified action; the need of flexibility, of perpetual adjustment, was strongly felt. The attitude of the Greek mind towards the laws is a conspicuous case in point.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This idea is brought out in a similar connection by E. Curtius, *Alterthum und Gegenwart*, i. 254 *sqq.*

Most Eastern nations had written religious codes which were supposed to have come direct from the mind or the hand of God, and were invested with a peculiar sanctity. With the Greeks, however, writing never acquired the consecration of religion. Certain rules of outward and ceremonial worship were preserved in the sanctuaries on inscribed tablets under priestly guardianship; but no system of religious doctrine and observance, no manuals containing authoritative rules of morality, were ever transmitted in documentary form. The laws, which were of divine authorship and origin, whose "life was not of to-day or yesterday," "the day of whose appearing no man knew," were the *unwritten* laws.

In the domain of secular life and of politics there was a similar reluctance to reduce laws to writing. Great weight was attached to continuous oral traditions, but these traditions were not embodied in formal enactments. The states of Greece proper long remained without written constitutions, which were for the most part framed in the decay of civic life. The earliest written laws of Greece were penal codes; but even in the forensic sphere, the bent of the Greek mind—or at least of Athenian jurymen—was to

make light of written technicalities, to think more of what the lawgiver meant than of what the laws said, to make the spirit supreme over the letter. To spiritualise law, however, is a dangerous process. The law is carnal, and law spiritualised is apt to become illegality.

The attempt to infuse into the laws warmth, animation, moral character, and individuality is distinctively Greek. The laws for them are not cold principles once for all embodied in the statute-book. They come forward as living and speaking personalities—questioning, reasoning, appealing, exhorting—and that not only in an imaginative composition, such as the famous passage in the *Crito* of Plato, when the Laws address Socrates in prison, but also in the orators. To Demosthenes the laws of Athens are the permanent and expressive counterpart of Athenian character; and they can speak to all who know how to question them. Law, as conceived by the Greeks, was not an alien force, a constraint externally imposed, but, like the state itself, part of their being; the representative of their true—their rational—self, the image of their moral life; not the denial of individual freedom, but the realisation of freedom.

The sense, then, that the laws represented a personal intelligence probably caused a disinclination to reduce them to written and stereotyped commands. The most ancient Greek traditions concerning the origin of law confirmed this feeling. The inspired decisions (*θέμιστες*) of the king, as judge, were the foundation of customary law. The earliest law-givers had revelations from the gods in whose confidence they were; Minos was the familiar friend of Zeus, Lycurgus of the Delphic god. When law no longer flowed in inspired words from the lips of the prince, it was still a living voice, the voice of the community, the public reason and conscience expressing itself in articulate form. The laws were in certain states (as in Crete and Sparta) promulgated and conveyed to the people in forms of music and poetry; we read, too, of laws arranged as catches and sung after dinner. The custom of singing the laws is explained by Aristotle<sup>1</sup> as an aid to memory before the invention of writing; we must remember, however, that long after writing was well known in Greece the laws still remained unwritten. That they should have been set to music and associated with festive occasions is fully in accord

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Probl.* xix. 28.

with the Greek sentiment, which saw in them not stern task-masters, but the companions of social life, friendly and intelligent advisers.

The objection to written laws was presented in this form—that “the endless and irregular movement of human things does not admit of a universal and simple rule;”<sup>1</sup> whereas the law aims at a fatal simplicity, which neglects individual peculiarities and shifting circumstances. The analogy of medicine was here urged. Written codes were compared to unvarying medical prescriptions.<sup>2</sup> It is a mistake, it was said, to be doctored by formulae. Even in Egypt where a fixed treatment is laid down by law, a doctor may deviate from it after three days if it proves ineffectual. Now, the language of the laws resembles an official medical prescription; it is general and does not meet the particular case. The inference drawn was that the supremacy of the best man is to be preferred to that of the law. Aristotle in noticing the argument rejects the analogy with medicine, and replies that the ruler is liable to self-interested motives from which the physician is free. If the patient suspected his physician of being bribed to

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Polit.* 294 B.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Pol.* iii. 15. 1286 a 10 *sqq.* and iii. 16. 1287 a 32 *sqq.*

poison him, he would choose rather to be doctored by formulae. The written law is indeed a mere formula, but as a formula it has the advantage of being unemotional; law is "reason, apart from human passion."

The need of flexibility which was felt in conduct was felt no less strongly in the region of philosophy. Truth was a Proteus ever taking new shapes,<sup>1</sup> a manifold and shifting thing, whose secret must be extorted by skill and patience, by the close grappling of dialectic, by the give and take of argument. No written exposition could reproduce the free play and infinite elasticity of thought. The historian Diodorus<sup>2</sup> contrasts unfavourably the restless movement of Greek speculation with the unchanging philosophy transmitted from father to son by the Chaldeans. The Greeks, he says, are always innovating; they do not follow those who have gone before; every day they found new sects; whereas the barbarians hold faithfully to their traditional doctrines. The Greeks of the great period of literature would not have spoken thus. They would not have acquiesced in the praise of philosophic immobility. Plato—except possibly in old age, when he became dogmatic—would have cited

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Plat. *Euthyd.* 288 B.

<sup>2</sup> Diodor. Sic. ii. 29.



this as a salient example of the baneful influence of the written word, of those *σήματα λυγρὰ* which arrest and petrify life.

In him is to be found the most outspoken disparagement of writing, as compared with speech, that occurs in Greek literature. I allude to the passage of the *Phaedrus* where Socrates says that writing is the mere image or phantom of the living and animated word.<sup>1</sup> It does not teach what was not known before; it serves only to remind the reader of something that he already knew.<sup>2</sup> It enfeebles the power of thought. It is delusive even as an aid to memory, for it weakens and supersedes this faculty by providing an artificial substitute. Moreover, it has no power of adaptation; it speaks in one voice to all; it cannot answer questions, meet objections, correct misunderstandings, or supplement its own omissions.

The same idea is repeated and expanded in two of the letters which have come down to us

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Phaedr.* 276 A, λόγον ζῶντα καὶ ἐμψυχον οὗ ὁ γεγραμμένος εἶδωλον ἂν τι λέγοιτο δικαίως.

<sup>2</sup> On books as a mere record of learning and starting-point of research compare the remarkable sentence of Varro (*Sat. Menipp. Reliq.*): "Libri nonnisi scientiarum paupercula monumenta sunt: principia inquirendorum continent, ut ab his negotiandi principia sumat animus."

under Plato's name (*Ep.* ii. and vii.) These letters profess to be written by Plato to the tyrant Dionysius II., and contain advice as to the proper method of studying philosophy. The view is here enforced that continuous written exposition is useless as a means for arriving at philosophic truth. Some other branches of learning may perhaps be communicated in this way, but not so philosophy. Only by painful effort and self-questioning, by the friction of mind with mind, and by friendly cross-examination, can true knowledge be attained. "Out of frequent and close conversation and much social intercourse a light is of a sudden kindled in the mind, as from a fire that leaps forth, which when once generated keeps itself alive."<sup>1</sup> Philosophical knowledge breaks in upon the mind as a mental illumination. Such is the metaphor employed and such the general idea that runs through these letters.

The publication of a systematic treatise on philosophy is here strongly condemned, Plato's own writings being exempted from this general censure on the ground (by no means a convincing

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Ep.* vii. 341 C, ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν ἐξαίφνης οἷον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδῆσαντος ἐξαφθὲν φῶς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γενόμενον αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ ἤδη τρέφει.

one) that they are purely dramatic compositions, and convey no formal doctrine. "It is for this reason," says Plato, or the writer speaking in his name,<sup>1</sup> "that I have never myself written anything upon these subjects. There neither is nor ever shall be a treatise of Plato's. What goes by his name are the words of Socrates." There is, however, in these letters more than the mere dislike of dogmatical exposition. The author's prejudice against publishing a book for the benefit of general readers is expressed in a tone which suggests a feeling of freemasonry in the higher learning. He goes so far as to say<sup>2</sup> that when you see any published writings, either promulgated laws, or other compositions, you may be sure that the author, if he was worth anything, did not himself regard these as matters of serious importance; if he did, he would not have published them—unless in a moment of infatuation. The mystery of learning was similarly guarded in the middle ages, and even Bacon inherited the dislike of allowing newly discovered truth to pass beyond an inner circle of disciples.

We have now seen the general line of objection taken by the Greeks to the written and formulated

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Ep.* ii. 314 C.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* vii. 344 C. D

word. An analogy of modern science may serve further to explain the precise reason of this. One of the most recent definitions of life attempted by the science of biology is "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations" (Herbert Spencer). Death, on the other hand, is "the non-correspondence of the organism with its environment." In a word, vitality is not absolute, but consists in relation; death is the snapping of a connection, the suspension of a relation. "The most distinctive peculiarity," says Dr. Burdon Sanderson,<sup>1</sup> "of living matter as compared with non-living is that it is ever changing while ever the same; that is, that life is a state of ceaseless change. . . . The word life is used in physiology in what, if you like, may be called a technical sense, and denotes only that state of change with permanence which I have endeavoured to set forth to you." The Greeks had advanced to no such definition, but they forestalled it by instinct. They felt and expressed it in all that they say of the spoken as opposed to the written word, though they could not enunciate it as a scientific principle. If life be the "con-

<sup>1</sup> At the British Association as reported in the *Times*, Sept. 13, 1889.

tinuous adjustment of internal to external relations," that man is most alive who most surely and with the greatest facility adapts himself to an altered environment; that word is most vital which can best transform and transmute itself according to the needs of its surroundings, thereby maintaining with them the most intimate connection. The written word, so it may be argued, is not self-adjusting and responsive to the changes of its environment; even the spoken word, once formulated, is no less immobile. Both are dead with the first change of external relations. The chain is snapped, the correspondence broken. They have no capacity for "continuous adjustment," no power to enter into new and vital connections under altered circumstances. Only the living speaker can do this; in him only can truth live; it most lives in him who is most alive. In biological language the best teacher is he who is in most vivid correspondence with his environment, that is, his pupils; who influences them, and in turn is influenced by them. If the environment change, he will most probably readjust himself; he will never suffer that death which is "want of correspondence."

We may push the analogy a little further.

The organism may be a fine one, but the faculty of correspondence weak ; then the word is partially dead. The man is richly stored with wisdom, but it is devitalised, because uncommunicated. Or the environment may be poor, but the organism, and the faculty of correspondence, fine. Only when all these factors are of high excellence—organism, environment, correspondence—is the word entirely vital.

It is easy to see how this truth would be instinctive in the Greek mind. They were a people highly gifted as individuals, keenly sociable as a community ; they were therefore not likely to leave out of their conception of the living word the notion of correspondence, of continuous adjustment. Indeed this is precisely the point on which Plato lays stress in the well-known passage of the *Phaedrus*:—"There is one inconvenience in written speech, which is in fact incident to painting also. The creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of written speeches. You might fancy that they had some intelligence of the meaning of what they say, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, they give the same

unvarying answer. And when they have been once written down they are tossed about anywhere among those who do and among those who do not understand them. And they have no reticences or proprieties towards different classes of persons ; and if they are unjustly assailed or abused, their parent is needed to defend his offspring, for they cannot protect or defend themselves.”<sup>1</sup> This dead letter is, contrasted with the word of knowledge, the “intelligent writing which is graven in the soul of him who has learned, and can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent.”<sup>2</sup>

No doubt—partly owing to the early prejudice against written mechanical symbols,—they added to the notion of the living word some thought of its organic beauty. They suspected in the written language of plain prose an indifference to form, a dulness, an ugliness which was in their minds associated with death, and hence with sterility. Beauty alone (as with Plato) was fecund and creative. Here, perhaps, is one consideration which may partially explain why it was that the Greeks bestowed such minute and unsparing labour on their written compositions—why Plato,

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedrus* 275 D.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 276 A.

the depreciator of literature, was not satisfied till he had written out the first eight words of the Republic (as was said to have been discovered after his death) in several different orders ; why Demosthenes, whose face was set towards action, wrote and re-wrote his speeches, would not trust to premeditation, neglected no detail of language or rhythm. Prose, it was felt, in order to be vital, must have the coherence, the perfection, of a living organism. A newly found art, it must employ every resource which could secure its permanence. Dionysius of Halicarnassus observes that Herodotus was the first who showed that prose could rival the highest poetry in persuasive power, in charm of expression and a capacity of exquisite delight.<sup>1</sup> In itself prose had a low vitality. Its existence was precarious. It was not like poetry, which was wedded to musical strains and lived on the lips of men. Raised as it had been out of the sphere of the inorganic, and resting on lifeless symbols, it might fall back into extinction. It must be clothed upon with beauty, it must learn a music of its own, and so become imperishable.

All spoken words, however, are not vital any more than all written words are dead. This did

<sup>1</sup> Dionys. Halic. *de Thucyd.* ch. 23. p. 865.



not escape the observation of the Greeks. One test of life is the capacity to impart life. No speech is vital which does not engender thought in those to whom it is addressed. Is it not a distinguishing feature of the highest eloquence that it stimulates and promotes reflection? it is not content with gratifying the ear, with eliciting applause, with ministering to the vanity of the speaker or the prejudices and passions of the audience. It awakens the reasoning faculty, it stirs it into active and sympathetic movement; it has in it the virtue of a creative act; in a word, it sets men thinking. You remember the keynote of the appeals of Demosthenes: "In God's name, I beg of you to think." The spoken word does not always set men thinking. The object of some speeches—of many political speeches—is to prevent men from thinking, to administer a narcotic to the reason. The living voice can be at least as lifeless as the written page. Without the interchange of dialogue—whether oral conversation, or the dialogue that the listener's mind holds with itself, that is, the inward reflection which is kindled by the breath of genuine eloquence—without this, a spoken speech may be as much devitalised as the same speech when committed

to paper. One is, in fact, the mere transcript of the other. You may remember the passage<sup>1</sup> where Plato describes the harangues, the set speeches of the public men of his day. They are as bad, he says, as books. They go on interminably, but they promote no interchange of thought; they neither ask nor answer questions; they are like brazen pots or pans, which, when once struck, continue to resound till a hand is placed upon them.

Plato had a clear apprehension of what was vital in spoken speech. But he does not appear to have seen in how true a sense a book may be said to be alive. To return to our illustration: the life of a great work of literature consists precisely in its faculty of "continuous adjustment" to a changing environment. *Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose.* There are books, poems in particular, whose vitality is inexhaustible, which have fresh meanings for every age. "The author," we are sometimes reminded, "was not conscious of all these meanings; your interpretation of him is fanciful; you are reading into him the ideas of other times; you find in him more than was intended." Yes, but this is the very evidence that

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Protag.* 329 A.

the book has life, that it is a living organism of a high and complex character, mobile and sensitive to its surroundings. It has latent correspondences with human nature, which time alone discovers ; it has the spontaneous activity, the unconscious self-adapting power of genius. The greater the genius of the writer the more responsive will the book be to its environment, the greater will be the area over which its relations extend, the more far-reaching, both in time and space, the range of its correspondences. For genius is, in fact, life and the faculty of engendering life in others. "A good book," says Milton, "is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life ;" or, as Bacon puts it, "neither are they (books) fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages."

Yet when we speak of life, whether actual, or, as in literature and art, metaphorical, we must remember that it is always a mystery. We can analyse its results, we can declare its conditions, we can never seize its essence. As in genius itself there is something of the wind that bloweth where it listeth, so in the productions of genius

the secret of their vitality still eludes us. But we feel that the vitality is there and can test it by the life which it communicates to others. Some literature possesses this life-giving virtue in a surpassing degree. "One of the arguments," says Lowell, "against the compulsory study of Greek, namely, that it is wise to give our time to modern languages and ancient history, involves, I think, a verbal fallacy. Only those languages can properly be called dead in which nothing living has been written. If the classic languages are dead, they yet speak to us, and with a clearer voice than that of any living tongue. If their language is dead, yet the literature it enshrines is crammed with life as perhaps no other writing, except Shakespeare's, ever was or will be. It is as contemporary with to-day as with the ears it first enraptured, for it appeals not to the man of then or now, but to the entire round of human nature itself. . . . We know not whither other studies will lead us, especially if dissociated from this; we do know to what summits, far above our lower region of turmoil, this has led, and what the many-sided outlook thence."

What we have been saying is applicable in a unique sense to the Bible, which, as a vital growth,

has nourished the spiritual life of successive generations, and has seen the death of creeds and sects, the crumbling away of systems of theology, which are mere abstracts and digests of truth, not the living food. It is the one book which appears to have the capacity of eternal self-adjustment, of uninterrupted correspondence with an ever shifting and ever widening environment.

Another reason for Plato's distrust of books—in addition to their incapacity for continuous adjustment—attaches itself to the high conception he had formed of the dignity of knowledge. True knowledge is not among marketable wares, that can be dealt in retail or wholesale at the pleasure of the consumer, that can be provided ready-made, carried about in a portable shape in books, and emptied from them into the mind of the learner, as from vessel to vessel. The tendency of language is to describe knowledge in terms of property, as so much wealth acquired or transmitted. But, as the Greeks felt, true knowledge is not an extrinsic advantage, but a hard-won possession, personal and inalienable; it is an inheritance which we must earn in order to possess it. We can enter on it only when we make it our own. It is not mere acquisition, but

mental enlargement, inward illumination. Knowledge, as a mere bundle of facts, is not power. Knowledge becomes Power only when it is vitalised by Reason.

"Much learning does not teach wisdom,"<sup>1</sup> was a saying of Heraclitus; and Aristotle, whose house was known as "the house of the reader," declared that "much learning produces much confusion."<sup>2</sup> This is not the sigh of intellectual disillusion which we overhear in the words of the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," "Much study is a weariness of the flesh." It is the demand for a science which will enable us to organise what we learn. A multifarious learning, for which the Greeks had a single distinctive word, does not imply any connected view of knowledge as a whole, or of the relation in which any one branch of learning stands to other departments. A mass of facts held in the memory may still remain unpenetrated by the light of reason. The subject-matter of knowledge must not be passively received, but submitted to the action of a formative mind, which

<sup>1</sup> πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει. Cp. Plat. *Laus* vii. 811 B, κίνδυνόν φημι εἶναι φέρουσιν τοῖς παισὶ τὴν πολυμαθίαν: and 819 A, ἡ πολυπειρία καὶ πολυμαθία κ.τ.λ.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Frag.* 51. 1484 a 39, πολυμάθεια πολλὰς παραχὰς ποιεῖ.

works upon the impressions, invests them with a meaning, adjusts their relations, reduces them to order and coherence. Then only does knowledge become luminous and philosophic.

The Greeks in their desire to find uniformity in nature and a rational meaning in history, imposed their own thought upon the universe, and anticipated the slow results of science. Yet it was well for the world that they had this passionate trust in the efficacy of reason; it would have been a calamity if, baffled in their first ardour for knowledge, they had become "misologists"—to use Plato's term<sup>1</sup>—or haters of reason, as others become misanthropists or haters of mankind, when they have been deceived in those whom they have trusted. As it was, they conceived the exercise of Logos as Rational Thought to be inseparable from the use of Logos as Rational Speech. The action of a formative mind upon the material of knowledge could hardly, they thought, fully operate without the collision of two personal intelligences, without the play of mind upon mind, the interchange of question and answer, the colloquial commerce of thought. One great charm of Greek literature is, that in reading it we seem to be

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Phaedo* 89 D.

present at the first awakening of the universal human reason ; we seem to watch and overhear it as it becomes conscious of itself. It does not yet speak quite like a book. It is thinking aloud. It debates with itself as with an antagonist ; so soon as it becomes articulate it puts the dialectical process before us in vivid and dramatic form. Philosophy becomes a dramatic conversation. History is not a chronicle, not a bare narrative of events ; a running comment of speech accompanies action, as the chorus does the action of the drama ; the actors themselves discuss and explain their own motives ; thought passes into words which interpret the inner conflicts and make the deeds intelligible.

Now, the Greeks were talkers, whereas we are readers. We read, or else we gossip ;—both very good things in their way, but they are not all. Speech and writing admit of other combinations than this ; and in the University, if anywhere, ought to be the meeting-point and place of reconciliation of these two factors of our intellectual life. Books we have, of course ; and speech too there is, or ought to be, in every one of its many forms. We have oral teaching, for example. Some tell us that a University which teaches is an anachronism



and a survival ; that Universities of this type came into existence at a time when learning could only be had through teachers, but that the invention of printing has superseded oral instruction, and transformed the idea of a University ; that the true University is now a library ; and the old Universities, if they continue to exist, should exist only for the discovery of truth, not for the diffusion of knowledge—for research, not for education.

This might be a tempting view to hold if it were not for certain facts of our experience. Most of us have observed, and often with much surprise, the mysterious virtue that resides in the living voice of the teacher—or shall we call it a strange weakness in the mind of the student?—which causes a lecture of very moderate merit (provided it is clear and fairly well arranged), to arrest the attention of the listener, when the same thing, expressed in a more finished and complete form, if read in a book awakens the most languid interest. This often happens even where the lecturer has no remarkable personality, and no special attractions of voice and manner. The reason, perhaps, is partly to be found in this—that the speaker is human. That is a fact of ceaseless interest to his fellow-creatures. Most

books are in a sense unhuman. How few men write like themselves and give us a true impression of what they are! Once on paper, men are apt to lose their own character, and either to become neutral and impersonal, or to take—unconsciously—a fictitious personality. When we meet the writer afterwards we are tantalised, almost angry with him, for having led us astray. Now, the speaker, or at least the teacher, cannot long wear a mask. He cannot keep up the neutrality of a book. You get to know him at the same time that you learn the subject he is talking about. To come into contact with learning in a human and embodied form has a peculiar mental stimulus of its own.

I do not propose to enter here upon any formal defence of oral instruction. But before leaving the subject I would quote some words of Newman's,<sup>1</sup> which sum up admirably most of what can be said upon this topic:—

“If the actions of men may be taken as any test of their conviction, then we have reason for saying this, viz., that the province and the inestimable benefit of the *litera scripta* is that of being a record of truth, and an authority of

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Sketches* i. 8-9.

appeal, and an instrument of teaching in the hands of a teacher ; but that, if we wish to become exact and fully furnished in any branch of knowledge which is diversified and complicated, we must consult the living man and listen to his living voice. I am not bound to investigate the cause of this, and anything I may say will, I am conscious, be short of its full analysis ;—perhaps we may suggest that no books can get through the number of minute questions which it is possible to ask on any extended subject, or can hit upon the very difficulties which are severally felt by each reader in succession. Or, again, that no book can convey the special spirit and delicate peculiarities of its subject with that rapidity and certainty which attend on the sympathy of mind with mind, through the eyes, the look, the accent and the manner, in casual expressions thrown off at the moment, and the unstudied turns of familiar conversation.

“ Whatever be the cause the fact is undeniable. The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home ; but the detail, the colour, the tone, the air, the life which makes it live in us, you must catch all those from those in whom it lives already. You must imitate the student in

French or German, who is not content with his grammar, but goes to Paris or Dresden: you must take example from the young artist who aspires to visit the great masters in Florence and in Rome. Till we have discovered some intellectual daguerreotype which takes off the course of thought, and the form, lineaments, and features of truth as completely and minutely as the optical instrument reproduces the sensible object, we must come to the teachers of wisdom to learn wisdom, we must repair to the fountain, and drink there. Portions of it may go from thence to the ends of the earth by means of books; but the fulness is in one place alone. It is in such assemblages and congregations of intellect that books themselves, the masterpieces of human genius, are written, or at least originated."

Your Society itself represents the two principles which we have been considering—the Spoken and the Written Word. In its literary aspect the union is vital to the well-being of each. In some nations the literary language is out of all relation to the spoken. In China writing has existed from time immemorial, but it is chiefly an official art, a means of government, not an expression of the mind and thought of the people. Even in

Latin the spoken and the written language stood far apart, and the breach continued to widen till classical Latin lost the vitality necessary to make it a medium of conversation. In modern Italy literature has by custom come to be written in a single dialect, the Tuscan. A true national literature seldom exists under such conditions. Greek writers on the other hand combined the popular and the literary idiom with a felicity to which there is no parallel except perhaps in English literature. The Greek language had reached maturity before it came under the influence of writing; and the literature retained the freshness, the directness, the simplicity of the best speaking—that charm which so quickly vanishes when style comes to be an art cultivated for its own sake. In the classical age there was no severance between literature and life; writers and thinkers were citizens and men of action. Later, they lost touch of popular sentiment, and literature was sensitive to the change. The divorce between speech and writing led to pedantry, bookishness, and unreality.

It is for the interest of thought as well as of literature to combine the habit of speech with that of writing. Some of us are perhaps inclined

to become mere absorbers of books, or possessors of note-books ; I say "possessors," for I know men all of whose thinking is in their note-books, not in their heads, there put by for future use against a day that probably never comes ; knowledge not in hand but in store. In this society you practise the old, the rival method, of discussion, oral and written ; you are aware how speech is the supplement to reading or writing ; how conversation clears the mind, and dispels difficulties which on paper seemed insoluble. Some of us look back in after-life to evenings spent in college—in which we talked things out up to late hours of the night, till our brains glowed with excitement and sleep became almost impossible—as among the keenest enjoyments we have ever known. Inside the University, and in societies such as this, men and books are being learnt together ; study and social intercourse go hand in hand. At the moment when the powers of the mind are ripening and expanding under the influence of systematic learning, we are taking also our first lessons in life and character. Knowledge is humanised ; it is brought home to us through the affections and the imagination as well as through the reason ; we and

it are more nearly identified ; it is enriched and elevated by the associations of friendship, by the joy of free and fearless discussion among equals, by ennobling rivalries, and by still more ennobling intellectual partnerships. In the meeting and collision of mind and mind, in the ready sympathy of friends, in the quick movements of kindred intelligences which outstrip and correct and interpret one another's reasonings, we have thought produced on principles that are unknown to workshops and factories. It is more like creation than production. The original material is found to have grown and multiplied. Knowledge thus humanised is already half-way to Wisdom ; for Knowledge cannot become Wisdom till it has been brought into contact with life. I can wish nothing better for your Society than that Speech and Writing may here give birth to wise Action ; that "out of debate and social intercourse a light may be kindled," an illuminative reason which may be a guide to conduct.

## THE UNITY OF LEARNING <sup>1</sup>

SOME of you doubtless remember a passage in the *Vicar of Wakefield* where the Principal of the University of Louvain makes these remarks: "You see me, young man, I never learned Greek and don't find that I have ever missed it. I have had a doctor's cap and gown without Greek; I have 10,000 florins a year without Greek; I eat heartily without Greek; and in short," continued he, "as I don't know Greek, I do not believe there is any good in it." Now, I am not going to ask you to discuss whether any one ever got any good out of Greek. But the words I have just quoted undoubtedly express the attitude of mind with which University training is still pretty widely regarded.

If you were to ask the average citizen, who had never happened to pay special attention to

<sup>1</sup> Delivered as the Closing Address of the Session at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, 1891.



the subject, what was taught in Colleges and Universities, he would probably answer, *useless learning*. And it is perhaps not such a bad answer after all ; in a certain sense we may even make it our own, and claim it as a distinction that, in the seats of Academic learning, little or nothing "useful" is taught. Their aim is not to turn out doctors, clergy, lawyers, merchants, but men—and now women also—with thoroughly trained minds, minds fortified and enlarged by different disciplines, and fitted not for this or that profession but for the conduct of life. To teach people how to think is perhaps the highest end of education, and to learn to think the most difficult thing a man is ever called on to do. A democratic society is inclined to do its thinking by deputy, if only it is permitted to do its voting individually. It is so easy to think in herds through Committees and sub-Committees and party organisations. To exercise the thinking power for its own sake is the central idea of Academic studies. Suppress thinking and you will be able to suppress freedom itself.

Voltaire, in a paper on the "Horrible Danger of Reading," imagines an edict of the Sublime Porte condemning, proscribing, anathematising

the infernal invention of printing for reasons which are then enumerated. "For these and other causes," the edict proceeds, "for the edification of the faithful and for the good of their souls we forbid them ever to read a book under pain of eternal damnation. . . . And to prevent any infringement of our ordinance we expressly forbid them *to think* under the same penalties; and we enjoin on all true believers the duty of informing us of any one who shall have pronounced four connected phrases, from which any clear and distinct sense can be extracted. We therefore ordain that in all conversation terms must be used that signify nothing according to the ancient usage of the Sublime Porte. Given in our Palace of Stupidity, etc."

In this country you have refused to take the Vow of Ignorance. The existence of your College, the munificence that started it, the steady enthusiasm with which the whole community supports it, prove that in Wales the love of learning is abroad among the people, and year by year gaining strength. We have here your public confession that you are not content with intellectual livelihood, you ask for intellectual life. You desire to broaden the basis of your

education, to make it truly liberal, in the sense that it shall emancipate the mind from what is narrow, local, partial. You are resolved to acquire not learning only but, if possible, also that wisdom which is the last result of mature knowledge. Though you may wish to get on in the world, to win success, the success you aim at is of a durable kind. It is not to be achieved by the cast of a die or by a lucky hit. A fortune, as it is understood in the mercantile world, may sometimes be made by a stroke of business ; on the other hand it may be lost as quickly as it was gained. The fortune which belongs to the things of the mind is outside the region of luck. It is not a speculation, it is a fortune slowly built up ; every step is won by toil ; but once yours it is yours for ever. You may increase your intellectual wealth by labour, but you cannot lose it except by repeated acts of wilful surrender. It may or may not bring financial success : it is pretty certain not to make you millionaires—but it is a possession which once you have acquired you will not exchange for any other kind of wealth.

The subjects which here constitute the body of your teaching are a witness to the original

and proper function of a University, as a place for the training of the human mind as such, without reference to the special vocations of after life. The motive, the governing principle, is the disinterested love of knowledge—knowledge, not as a means to an end but as in itself a good. You embrace Literature, Art, and Science, the three chief disciplines by which man seeks to attain truth or strives after beauty ; and these departments are so inherently connected together as to form an ideal unity. They are the nucleus of University learning, they embody the idea that underlies a University ; nor is it any disparagement to the other studies to say that we have here the core and heart of the system, the common source from which professional studies and faculties derive their theoretic principles, and apart from which they cannot attain their specific ends.

The Sciences of Medicine, Law, and Theology,—practical sciences as they may be called,—do not aim at scientific knowledge as such, though scientific knowledge is a condition of their success. To pursue knowledge for its own sake and apart from practical applications is strictly speaking the purpose and idea of a Uni-

versity discipline in Arts and Sciences. What is in some Universities of our country known as the Faculty of Arts, and in Germany as the Philosophical Faculty, in which language, philosophy, literature, and the pure sciences,—the mathematical, the physical, and the natural sciences,—all meet, is the connecting link which unites Academical learning with professional study. It reaches out into border territories and everywhere finds common ground. So long as the idea on which it rests is operative a University College cannot become a mere group of departmental schools, or a polytechnic institute. The historical and the philosophical group of subjects stands in close relation to the Faculties of Law and of Theology; they supply, or ought to supply, the theoretic basis on which the latter rest; while the department of Mathematics, in its intimate union with the physical and to some extent with the natural sciences, allies itself with Medicine.

The Arts and Sciences taught, then, in Colleges such as yours are the pledge of the Unity of Learning,—that old Greek idea embodied in the word Philosophy, which is in danger of being lost in the growing specialism of our age.

Socrates in the *Phaedo*<sup>1</sup> speaks of his delight at the first utterance of the word "Mind." He who uttered it, says Aristotle,<sup>2</sup> "stood out as a sober man among random talkers." It must be owned that the Greeks were sometimes carried away by this discovery. They were misled by their own intellectual ardour, by their indomitable impulse to know. They saw that there must be an intelligible law of things, and impatiently they anticipated it. They could not always wait to read the "long and difficult language of facts."<sup>3</sup> Their unifying instinct tyrannised over them. Not only was this so in natural science and in the philosophy of mind; their early historical records and popular traditions also suffer from a premature attempt to make the course of events rational, to import order and symmetry into history, to trace the action and method of divine government without a sufficient basis of facts.

Yet for all this it was a fruitful and inspiring passion,—this belief in a constructive reason, in an order of things which the human mind can discover, in a philosophy that was "the knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Phaed.* 97 C.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Met.* i. 3. 984 b 17.

<sup>3</sup> Plat. *Polit.* 278 D, τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων μακρὰς καὶ μὴ ῥαδίους συλλαβάς.

of all things human and divine." In the course of centuries the authority of such a Philosophy has been challenged; it has been divested of its prerogatives; its functions have been parcelled out among specialised sciences; its separate departments have become independent branches of knowledge, each following its own method and obeying laws of its own. Philosophy, as many would contend, has been dethroned, and is no longer the Science among the Sciences; some would deny that it has any scientific claims whatever; Philosophy, it is said, must be content with the dream-land of the Absolute. It may amuse itself with solving the insoluble problems.

Now it may be observed that the principle of specialisation which is supposed to have dethroned Philosophy, not only rules, as it ought in some sense to rule, in the intellectual and industrial domains, but is beginning also to claim sway over the life of the individual. I have heard of an organisation which pledges its members—who consist, I believe, chiefly of young ladies—to read a solid book for one half hour a day. Whether the half hour may be taken in separate doses of so many minutes each, I do not know. But at any rate the half-hour's reading must be

got through under penalty of paying a fine ; and it is said that as midnight draws near there is sometimes in festive gatherings a flutter and a stir among those who have barely left themselves time to retrieve the day. As this is a highly specialised association for the promotion of culture, so there are other similar associations for the supervision of morals. Every part of a man's nature has a Vigilance Committee or Society appointed to superintend it. Morality is divided into its component elements ; in Plato's phrase, Virtue is "broken up into small change."<sup>1</sup> The danger of such piecemeal morality is a very real one,—that these several departments impressed with their own relative importance may each aspire to constitute the whole of virtue, or may even set up new and unauthorised codes of their own. Now if such external props and aids to virtue are needed—as I do not deny they may be—if departmental supervision must be exercised over morality in its various aspects, at least let it be borne in mind that there still exists a connected scheme of virtues and duties, a law of right conduct that is supreme over all forms and phases of individual life ; that there

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Meno* 79 A, *κερματίζειν τὴν ἀρετὴν*.



are many virtues, yet Virtue is one ; that though there are ten commandments in the decalogue, there is still one Righteousness.

We cannot indeed wonder that specialisation should sometimes be pushed beyond its proper limits when we see the vast fields of knowledge that have been opened up by this method. Yet it is none the less true that excessive specialisation is the death of Science. It is so even in the case of a single science. In ancient Egypt we are told, there was a special class of physicians for each part of the human body and for each kind of illness. None of these doctors treated the body as a whole. Scientific medicine was therefore impossible. Excessive specialisation would moreover ultimately involve the dissolution of society. Conceive, if you can, a world of specialists, in which each man's vision and labour are concentrated on some microscopic point in the field of human activity, and the very idea of a political and social organism disappears. There is a point at which the subdivision of labour in the intellectual sphere must be checked, and some unifying principle introduced, if we are to retain any rational conception of man, or of the world or of human life.

The commonwealth of learning is at present endangered by disintegrating tendencies. A single science in the course of a few years is multiplied into half a dozen sciences; mere *disiecta membra* of knowledge they will be unless they are reunited by constructive thought and held together by some regulative and master principle. Here, then, comes in the function of Philosophy,—to survey the whole field of labour even to its farthest limits; to exhibit the common principles underlying the several sciences, the laws of thought which govern their methods; to harmonise their results and reduce to unity their highest generalisations: in a word, to bind together the many domains and outlying provinces of learning and to form them into a system. Plato, you will remember, formed a grand idea of Philosophy, as that comprehensive science which embraces not only logic and ethics and metaphysics, but also the study of politics, of religion, of fine art, of social science, of language, and of education. It was an idea impossible to realise in the infancy of the sciences, but it was a vision from the mount of prophecy; it is still a vision, but a waking vision, and no mere dream. Philosophy may hope to be restored to something like

her old supremacy through the agency of those very sciences which have dethroned her. Their highest generalisations are for her the points of departure, they are the materials on which she works. Philosophy should aspire to become the Science of the Sciences, the unity and meeting-point of all, including all and yet distinct from each.

It is precisely this ideal Unity of the Sciences that is represented by a University or a University College, as a place of learning and research. Not that every student must necessarily be trained in technical philosophy, but all ought to be initiated into the principles of knowledge, taught not only how to know this or that, but how to *know*. All should acquire a certain habit of mind, an enlargement of view and breadth of judgment. This expansion of the mind is what we need in the professions as well as in the pursuit of liberal learning. The saying of Galen, ἄριστος ἰατρὸς καὶ φιλόσοφος, "the best physician is also a philosopher"—a man of philosophic mind—is still true, though medicine has become one of the most specialised of the sciences. In a similar spirit Aristotle<sup>1</sup> distinguishes the technical knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *de Part. Anim.* i. 1, 639 a 1-10. It is the mark of τὸν ὅλως πεπαιδευμένον to be able κρίναι εὐστόχως τί καλῶς ἢ μὴ ἀποδίδ-

of a science from the knowledge of scientific method. A man of general philosophic culture will, he says, be able to form a competent judgment on the specialist's treatment of his own branch of study. Such a critical faculty, which can be applied to almost any subject, he looks on as the highest and most characteristic result of a liberal education.

Though the methods of the sciences may differ the method of learning is one ; and in all education the method is at least as important as the instruction conveyed. Every people that has set a value upon the things of the mind has recognised this fact. Socrates pressed it home upon his own generation ; and to-day the German Universities are the standing witnesses to the same truth. Vital knowledge cannot, like common wares, be passed from hand to hand : it cannot be mechanically conveyed into the mind as so much mental furniture. "How I wish," said Socrates, in the *Symposium*,<sup>1</sup> as he took his seat by his friend the poet Agathon, "that wisdom could be infused through the medium of touch, out of the full into

ωσιν ὁ λέγων. He may be regarded as *περὶ πάντων ὡς εἰπεῖν κριτικὸν τινα*. Similarly *Met. a.* 3. 995 a 12-14 the knowledge of an *ἐπιστήμη* and of the *τρόπος* ("method") *ἐπιστήμης* are distinguished.

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Symp.* 175 D. Jowett's Trans.

the empty man, like the water which the wool sucks out of the full vessel into an empty one ; in that case how much I should prize sitting by you !” But Socrates knew that this was just what could not be. No teacher that ever lived has shown with such compelling force as Socrates himself how unlike learning is to mechanical acquisition. One reason for his bitter hostility to the methods and pretensions of the Sophists was that they encouraged, as he believed, the delusion that mental culture may be externally received and acquired,<sup>1</sup> that ready-made intellectual results can be supplied, if only the market value of the commodity is fixed.

Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> too, speaks of the “rapid but unscientific” method of the teaching of the Sophists. They fancied they were imparting education when they were only imparting results (οὐ γὰρ τέχνην ἀλλὰ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης διδόντες παιδεύειν ὑπελάμβανον) : and he illustrates their method by the example of a shoemaker, who, professing to teach the art of making painless shoes, put into the apprentice’s hand a large assortment of shoes

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Plat. *Rep.* 518 C, φασὶ δέ που οὐκ ἐνούσης ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐπιστήμης σφέας ἐντιθέναι, where the word ἐντιθέναι suggests what we call the “cram” system. See also *Protag.* 314 A-B.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Soph. Elench.* 33. 184 a 2-8.

ready-made (δοίη δὲ πολλὰ γένη παντοδαπῶν ὑποδημάτων). There are no tricky short arts to knowledge. "Learning," Aristotle elsewhere says, "is painful,"<sup>1</sup> and teaching too is difficult. To evoke the thinking process in another, to guide the mind without forcing it, to follow and understand a pupil's thought even when it is misdirected,—this is, in its highest perfection, the gift of a Socrates and of a few born teachers, yet it is also the ideal at which all teachers ought to aim.

If we would gain any orderly conception of knowledge as a whole let us each begin by seeking after unity in his own department. Some one or two branches of study within our department are probably more familiar to us than the others; they form a solid tract of land which we have reclaimed from the waste and made our own. But we ought to know enough of all these branches to think out their connections, and to bring them into organic relation with one another. We shall then be the better prepared to pass on to the other sciences where diverse methods and new intellectual processes are involved, and to fit them into the general system of our thought. The

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *Pol.* v. (viii.) 1339 a 28, μετὰ λύπης γὰρ ἡ μάθησις.

guidance of a good teacher here becomes a matter of the first moment to the pupil.

The same subject may be taught, the same book read, the same information given, but the whole difference to the pupil is in the way it is done. It is not the result that is of value, but how you get the result. The method it is that makes the teacher. A man of large and liberal culture will treat even the rudiments of his subject differently from one who has, so to speak, just learnt his own lesson, or has an eye only to the coming examination. The true teacher cannot forget that his subject is a unity. He will not neglect the whole in the part. At each stage of progress he will give glimpses into something beyond. Beginning with particulars, he will in and through them lead up to principles. He will interpret the details, and make them orderly and intelligible by the illuminating force of reason. At the same time he will be aware that his own department is related to a larger whole, to that which constitutes the unity of knowledge itself. He will not deal with his subject in the narrow spirit of one who has acquired some technical aptitude and seeks to make his own craft usurp the whole universe. The craftsman looks to one

thing only; he has not the time or training to see the relations in which his own special subject stands to other pursuits. It is enough for him if he can make that one field of human activity his own, though it may be infinitesimally small.

Now the teacher and the student should imitate the craftsman in thoroughness, minuteness, and precision. He must not be led away by the charlatan's view that thoroughness means pedantry. Pedantry is not accuracy, precision of thought, mastery of detail. It means disproportion and loss of perspective; a lingering over minutiae till all the sense of the whole is lost. It means the learning which cannot organise what we know even in our own department, much less take a survey of any wider field. The pedant becomes a slave to rules which are made by the abstract understanding, working within too limited a sphere and divorced from real insight. Pedantry is rigid and lifeless not so much because it draws too fine distinctions; rather the pedant's distinctions are not fine enough, he does not allow for the variety which is to be found in the concrete world; he seeks to bring the contents of his thought under the bondage of the letter. The



living truths of nature, of art, and of literature escape the apprehension of one who moves in the atmosphere of intellectual abstraction. Not less but greater grasp of detail is needed ; but of a kind which implies wider horizons, an enlargement of the whole mental outlook. It is the distinctive mark of a University education to give such a thoroughness, which is not pedantry, and an enlargement of mind which does not lose itself in generalities.

This attitude and quality of mind is not, of course, the exclusive gift of University training. It is not the privilege of the few, an aristocratic freemasonry from which common men are shut out. It is found in some who have but little book knowledge, and who have got their chief learning from life,—in the market-place, in the counting-house, in the workshop and in the camp. Still whatever failures have to be recorded against University education, it is the distinctive aim and office of a University, as the home of the undivided sciences, to bestow this grasp of mind, this sureness of insight, this comprehensive judgment. And if it is of supreme importance to a community to keep its men of intellect in touch with the people and with their mental life, then let us who are

trained in Academic learning do what in us lies to foster among us that philosophic breadth and largeness of view which rests on moral no less than on intellectual sympathy.

Excessive specialism tends to divorce Learning from Life ; the men of Thought from the men of Action ; the Scholar from the Citizen ; to place a great gulf between the world of the Learned and the world of the Unlearned. That gulf it is the duty of men of learning to bridge over. Those who have the clearest consciousness of the unity of knowledge ought also most vividly to realise the unity of civic life ; for the human reason which lays down the regulative principles of thought is one and the same as that reason which has worked in history, imposing its dictates upon men and upon nations, directing their blind instincts and moulding their institutions. The same force of reason which is at the basis of science is at the basis also of society. It is the principle of unity which knits us together into an intellectual and civic community. Thought and action, knowing and doing, are not opposing and conflicting principles. Their harmony and equilibrium are essential to the sanity of a people. Where the balance and due correspondence be-

tween the principles are lost, a nation runs into fanaticism or sinks into sloth.

Far be it from me to say that there are not in every generation and in every people some solitary thinkers, who best fulfil the purpose of their life by standing aloof from the activities of ordinary men and by devoting themselves in the study or the laboratory to that wherein the bent of their genius lies. All action does not consist in external acts ; there are men whose *knowing* is their *doing*, and whose inward and silent energy may work upon the world at large with a force greater than that of conquerors or of statesmen. Nor would I be taken to imply that the less distinguished men, whose path still lies in the field of intellect—in literature or science or education—must of necessity become party politicians if they are to do their duty as citizens. It is surely no great harm that there should be a few who are detached from the service of party, especially if they are able thereby to take a clearer and larger outlook over politics and to see beyond the party triumphs of the hour.

Still the learned world has not, perhaps, always been mindful of what is due from it to the society of which it forms a part. It has too

often fancied itself to be in possession of some enchanted ground, and to hold the key to mysteries which none else may open. The very dialect of learning has often been enough to frighten off intruders. You required a special novitiate to understand it. In order to be profound it was thought necessary to be obscure. Learned exposition must needs be unintelligible to men of culture who had not acquired the formulae and mannerisms of the craft. Learned men, we may hope, are ceasing to think of themselves as a guild or exclusive fraternity. The great scientific discoverers of our age—a Darwin and a Pasteur—are models of good writing. They are bent on saying what they mean and on saying it clearly—the first secret of style—and the words are exactly adequate to the thought that is to be expressed. Even the philosophers who have long been the worst offenders are following the example of the leaders of science and learning to write with a view to be understood. Nothing is so hard but that it can be said clearly as well as obscurely. Not that what is intrinsically hard can be made easy, but it is capable of being made clear to a trained intelligence.

. This single fact, that learned men are acquiring the use of their mother tongue, is already producing a remarkable influence on the diffusion of knowledge, and doing much to efface the sharp distinction between the learned and the unlearned. The distinction can, indeed, never be completely effaced. There are whole departments of knowledge whose processes can only be followed by a few, though their leading principles and methods may be made intelligible to others besides experts. To many it seems a contradiction in terms to speak of popularising knowledge. A witty Frenchman classes together under one description those who would "make Science popular, Metaphysics intelligible, and Vice respectable." Anyhow we may freely admit the dangers of what is called "popularisation." So far as it has led people to believe that they can take over the intellectual results of others, and appropriate them without an effort; so far as it has encouraged the acceptance of showy paradoxes instead of sober criticism, to that extent it is mischievous delusion. But this is in truth the vulgarising rather than the popularising of knowledge.

There is a genuine sense in which knowledge may be popularised; but it can only be done by

one who has not merely accumulated but has assimilated knowledge, who is filled with its spirit, with whom it has become a living force, taking possession of the whole man, penetrating to the recesses of his personality, laying hold of him by his affections no less than by his intellect; whose mental being is not divided into two halves one of which resides in his books and a wholly different one in the outer world; who keeps before his eyes the relation in which his own department stands to the whole fabric of scientific thought; who can expound and utter what he knows in such vital form that it shall touch others with the inspiration of life. Books alone may give information, but not one in a thousand can in this sense popularise knowledge. You must fall back on the old Socratic principle, the method of human intercourse and the converse between minds. The teacher ought to be the subject vitalised and humanised in the presence of the student; the science kindled into warmth and touching with its glow the expectant sympathies of the listeners. The electricity of thought ought to be abroad in the air of the class-room.

How widely different a thing this is from the false kind of popularised teaching which has

brought it into disrepute among the learned ! We can easily account for the instinctive dread which the genuine Dryasdust feels on being told that he must bring the results of his learning before the popular mind. He cannot do so. His learning is a dead weight of facts. It is uninformed by reason, and uninspired by sympathy. "You must be above your knowledge," says Newman, "not under it, or it will oppress you ; the more you have of it, the greater will be the load. The learning of a Salmasius or a Burman, unless you are its masters, will be your tyrant. 'Imperat aut servit ;' if you wield it with a strong arm it is a great weapon ; otherwise

' Vis consili expers

Mole ruit sua.'

You will be overwhelmed like Tarpeia, by the heavy wealth which you have exacted from tributary generations."

True learning being such as we have described, it is evident that many subjects which, if seized in their true relations, rank highest as instruments of culture, are least fitted to be brought to the sole test of examination. Such, for instance, is the department of classical literature. It is a subject that is many-sided, and whose value depends upon

its scope and comprehensiveness, and on the wide horizons which open out of it. The classical languages, from one point of view, fall within the sphere of the exact sciences. The general laws of their growth and decay can be stated with scientific precision. On another side they are as free as thought itself, they look out over the whole field of human endeavour and imagination. We may come to them as grammarians, as historians, as archaeologists, as anthropologists ; and to each class of inquirer they will yield results of the highest interest. But if we are to apprehend classical literature in its full spirit and power, we shall not approach it in the first instance in the attitude of specialists. We shall study it simply as containing imperishable thought in noble language. We shall not sever the language and the thought ; they are not accidentally related. Most of the failures of classical education may be set down to the attempt to treat these two elements apart. To know the words without the sense, and to know the sense without the words,—this sums up the character of the bad scholar and the shallow thinker. No : the language is the key, the one master-key, to unlock the thought.

But, you say, we may read the classics in



translations, and thence get at the spirit and essence of antiquity, discarding what is outward and accidental. Well, one may no doubt learn much about antiquity by this means ; and if one has a peculiar genius, one may even divine something of its inmost spirit, as has been done by a few men of rare imagination and insight, such as Schiller and Keats, whose knowledge has either been very imperfect or derived mainly from second-hand sources. But translations, the very best, are but shadows of the original. You cannot transfuse the life-blood of a poem into any translation. One language, moreover, differs from another, above all an ancient language differs from a modern,—not only in outward form, but in inward and essential character. It is not that they express the same thing in different ways. They express a different thing, wholly or partially different, each in its own way.

Words are not coins which have an interchangeable value. A scientific term is capable of international exchange. The idea that it conveys can be passed from land to land, uncoloured by emotion, untouched by association. Each people can express it in exactly equivalent form. A cube root is the same thing to an Englishman as to a

Russian. But the language of literature is totally distinct. The words stand rooted in the soil of national life, they are nourished from a people's history. Around them have gathered the accretions of thought of successive generations. The associations of poetry and eloquence cling about them. Words whose nearest equivalents are for us dead and prosaic stirred the pulses of a Greek and vibrated with memories of Troy and Salamis. How different, again, is the same word when it meets us in Homer and in the New Testament ! To the student of language, one such word is in itself the epitome of a vast chapter in the history of thought, or represents, it may be, a revolution in our ideas of morals and religion. The abstract words which express intellectual moods and processes, moral sentiments, religious aspirations, are essentially untranslatable. They have no exact, often no approximate, equivalents in other languages. Classical literature may, therefore, be taught either from the narrow point of view of a grammarian, who sees nothing beyond ; or, starting from the basis of language and grammar, we may penetrate into philosophy, art, and religion,—into all that throws light on the genius and institutions of a people, and fixes its place in civilisation.

None who have not themselves used and tried the examination test are aware how ill adapted it is to gauge the value of classical education in these its larger aspects. Facts that, in the process of being communicated by the teacher had become vital knowledge, which had taken the colour of the pupil's mind as he advanced by tentative steps and slow stages and by frequent repetition of the idea, reappear on paper as so many ready-made results. They are artificially produced from a notebook by an effort of memory, and with conscious intention of scoring marks. The candidate believes that these will be more paying than his own authentic ideas, which are probably immature and somewhat imperfect in expression. And he is unfortunately too often right; for examiners have to judge of answers by their actual worth and quality; and, unless they can detect a rote-like unintelligent repetition of phrases, they cannot safely go behind the answers and speculate as to their source, and take off marks because they think that the ideas, or the form in which they are expressed, are too good to be the product of the candidate's own mind. I here leave out of account the rare instances in which an original force of mind makes itself felt even under the

artificial conditions of examination. But, speaking broadly, we may say that the formative process of thought is arrested as soon as a candidate sits down to an examination on literature, or even studies with a view to it. Second-hand generalisations and stereotyped judgments are put on paper. It is an inherent defect of examinations, that in certain branches of study they can do little more than lay bare results. They do not help to trace the stages and steps of mental growth, to follow processes of thought, and to distinguish such as are vital from such as are mechanical.

A University, however, has other means besides examination of ensuring genuine work and of tracing progress along systematic lines of study. The College Lecturer who is in daily contact with his classes, and who not only lectures but keeps to the good old custom of oral questioning, discerns the intellectual needs of his pupils, and knows of what stuff they are made better than he can ever learn from written examinations. The business of a teacher, some one has said,—as popularly understood—is to help a candidate to play with a straight bat the most artful twisters of an examiner; and there is no doubt that the domin-

ance of the examination system has tended to create a wrong conception of the teacher even in Universities whose function is recognised to be other than that of an examining Board. An Oxford undergraduate, a Scholar of his College, was about to go in for his final examination. He went to his tutor to talk over with him a difficult metaphysical problem. The tutor discussed it on various sides, but brought no definite solution. The pupil at last told him plainly that this was not what he wanted. "What I want is the examination answer to the question; give it me in a precise form." "I really can't," was the reply; "it is a point on which nobody can speak dogmatically. Honestly, I don't know." "Come now, Mr.—," said the other, "but you are *paid* to know." Yes, paid to know, and to put our knowledge in cheap and handy form for ready use and distribution,—that is the theory of those who regard University teaching as a commercial industry, and a University Degree as a "hall-mark" which ought to be easily purchased with the minimum expenditure of intellectual effort. To such persons knowledge is of value only if it leads directly to material advancement, and the different branches of University study, pursued without any

sense of their vital interdependence, are only the means to a professional end.

But liberal studies followed in an illiberal spirit fall below the mechanical arts in dignity and worth. Arithmetic, says Plato, is an excellent preliminary to philosophic study "if pursued for the love of knowledge and not in the spirit of a shop-keeper."<sup>1</sup> The proviso here contained presents the Greek ideal of education. Intellectual training is an end in itself and not a mere preparation for a trade or a profession. The history of the word *σχολή* in its transition from "leisure" to "school," through the intermediate stage of "philosophical discussion," is the unconscious testimony of the Greek genius to the pure and disinterested love of learning. Greek "leisure" is sometimes spoken of slightly as if it were the luxury of the rich or the dilettanti, an easy sauntering through life and avoidance of painful effort. But in truth it is not the opposite of activity, but a special form of activity, the strenuous exercise of the intellectual or artistic faculties. It is no state of blissful indolence, which is the ideal of some Orientals; no life of feasting, which is the ideal of the savage; no

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Rep.* vii. 525 D, ἐὰν τοῦ γνωρίζειν ἕνεκά τις αὐτὸ ἐπιτηδεύῃ, ἀλλὰ μὴ τοῦ καπηλεύειν.

round of trivial amusement, which is the ideal of the man of fashion. It is work, genuine work ; not, however, to satisfy bodily wants and the needs of animal existence, but to appease a pressing mental appetite,—the desire for knowledge or the desire for beauty.

Leisure and Work,—the two ideas are to some minds inconsistent, but here is their point of meeting. “To do their duty is their only holiday,”<sup>1</sup> is a description we read of Athenian character in Thucydides. *To work their minds*, that too is their holiday, their true *σχολή*, the leisure that is worthy of one who is at heart more than a mere mechanic, whose energies are not all spent upon task-work done to order, with quick returns of profit as his reward, but who has free activities of mind which claim scope and play, energies which are voluntary, self-imposed, delightful ; which result in the discipline, the quickening of every human faculty ; useless, it may be, in the estimation of those who believe only in machinery, but for all who would not sacrifice the ends of life to the means, to be counted among the first conditions of existence.

A College or a University is not an industrial

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. i. 70. 9.

association but in some sense a spiritual community. In the spiritual and intellectual life the distinctions of *mine* and *thine* disappear. We are rich not by what we have and keep, but by what we share. "Friends have all things in common" (*κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων*) was the proverb which the Pythagoreans took for the motto of their school. They extended their idea of common property to embrace ownership in the spiritual and intellectual sphere no less than in the outward goods of life; and a far truer doctrine it is than the principle of unlimited competition in matters intellectual. There is no such thing as intellectual isolation. The worker in each domain should cultivate the power of viewing knowledge as a whole, and of discovering the bond of unity between the several parts. From one department of learning, light is flashed back in unexpected ways upon another, and studies which have long seemed unrelated recognise one another on a sudden as sister sciences.

With the expansion of your College new subjects will doubtless be admitted; and the labour of teachers and students will become more highly specialised. And it is well it should be so. That is for us, in our day, the road of progress. Only



we must strive in the multiplicity of the sciences to apprehend the common principles of knowledge, and to keep the parts in just subordination to the conception of the whole ; and this needs intelligent sympathy no less than grasp of intellect. The inspiring principle of University study is the sense that learning is not a dead tradition but living and growing truth. Never let us lose the idea of a *Universitas Literarum*, of a community of letters,—that indivisible kingdom of thought, whose several parts are not disconnected fragments, but are linked together in organic union, each essential to the joint action of the whole ; which should be animated by one spirit, and understand one another's aims and methods. Only in this way can we hope with the growing subdivision of intellectual labour to combine the singleness of Truth, the real Unity of Learning.

## ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF FINE ART AND POETRY<sup>1</sup>

### I. USEFUL ART AND FINE ART

ARISTOTLE it must be premised at the outset, has not dealt with fine art in any separate treatise, he has formulated no theory of it, he has not marked the organic relation of the arts to one another. While his love of logical distinctions, his tendency to rigid demarcation, is shown even in the province of literary criticism by the care with which in the *Poetics* he maps out the subordinate divisions of his subject (the different modes of recognition, the elements of the plot, etc.), yet he nowhere classifies the various kinds of poetry ; still less has he given a scientific grouping of the fine arts and exhibited

<sup>1</sup> The books from which I have derived special help on this subject are E. Müller *Geschichte der Theorie der Kunst bei den Alten*, Breslau, 1834. Reinkens *Aristoteles über Kunst*, Wien, 1870. Teichmüller *Aristotelische Forschungen*, Halle, 1869. Döring *Die Kunstlehre des Aristoteles*, Jena, 1870.

their specific differences. We may confidently assert that many of the aesthetic problems which have been since raised never even occurred to his mind, though precise answers to almost all such questions have been extracted from his writings by the unwise zeal of his admirers. He has however left some leading principles which we shall endeavour to follow out. There is, doubtless, a special risk at the present day attending any such attempt to bring together his fragmentary remarks and present them in a connected form. His philosophy has in it the germs of so much modern thought that we may, almost without knowing it, find ourselves putting into his mouth not his own language but that of Hegel. Nor is it possible to determine by general rules how far the thought that is implicit in a philosophical system, but which the author himself has not drawn' out, is to be reckoned as an integral part of the system. In any case, however, Aristotle's *Poetics* cannot be read apart from his other writings. No author is more liable to be misunderstood if studied piecemeal. The careless profusion with which he throws out the suggestions of the moment, leaving it to the intelligence or the previous knowledge of his readers to adjust his remarks and limit their

scope, is in itself a possible source of misapprehension. It was an observation of Goethe that it needs some insight into Aristotle's general philosophy to understand what he says about the drama ; that otherwise he confuses our studies ; and that modern treatises on poetry have gone astray by seizing some accidental side of his doctrine. If it is necessary, then, to interpret Aristotle by himself, it will not be unfair in dealing with so coherent a thinker to credit him with seeing the obvious conclusions which flow from his principles, even when he has not formally stated them. To bring the substance of his special teaching into relation with his fundamental tenets is a very different thing from discovering in him ideas which, even if present in the germ, could only have ripened in another soil and under other skies.

The distinction between fine and useful art was first brought out explicitly by Aristotle. In the history of Greek art we are struck rather by the union between the two forms of art than by their independence. It was a loss for art when the spheres of use and beauty came in practice to be dissevered, when the useful object ceased to be decorative, and the things of common life no longer gave delight to the maker and to

the user. But the theoretic distinction between fine and useful art needed to be laid down, and to Aristotle we owe the first clear conception of fine art as a free and independent activity of the mind, outside the domain both of religion and of politics, having an end distinct from that of education or moral improvement. He has not indeed left us any continuous discussion upon fine art. The *Poetics* furnishes no complete theory even of poetry, nor is it probable that this is altogether due to the fragmentary form in which this treatise has come down to us. But Aristotle is a systematic thinker, and numberless illustrations and analogies drawn from one or other of the arts, and scattered through his writings, show that he had given special attention to the significance of art in its widest sense ; and that as he had formed a coherent view about the place which art held in relation to nature, to science, and to morality, so too he had in his own mind thought out the relation in which the two branches of art stood to one another.

“Art imitates nature” (ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν), says Aristotle, and the phrase has been repeated and has passed current as a summary of the Aristotelian doctrine of fine art. Yet the

original saying was never intended to differentiate between fine and useful art ; nor indeed could it possibly bear the sense that fine art is a copy or reproduction of natural objects. The use of the term "nature" would in itself put the matter beyond dispute ; for nature in Aristotle is not the outward world of created things ; it is the creative force, the productive principle of the universe. The context in each case where the phrase occurs determines its precise application. In *Physics* ii. 2. 194 a 21 the point of the comparison is that alike in art and in nature there is the union of matter ( $\psi\lambda\eta$ ) with constitutive form ( $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ ), and that the knowledge of both elements is requisite for the natural philosopher as for the physician and the architect. In *Meteorol.* iv. 3. 381 b 6 the reference is to cooking as an artificial mode of producing results similar to those produced by the spontaneous action of heat in the physical world ; digestion itself (according to the medical theory of the day) being given as an instance of a process of cooking carried on by nature within the body. Again in *de Mundo* 5. 396 b 12 the order of the universe is explained to result from a union of opposites ; and three illustrations, derived from painting,

music, and grammar, are added of the mode in which art in imitating nature's diversity works out harmonious results. In most of the instances above quoted "art" is limited by the context to useful art; but the analogy does not rest there. Art in its widest acceptation has, like nature, certain ends in view, and in the adaptation of means to ends catches hints from nature who is already in some sort an unconscious artist.

While art in general imitates the method of nature, the phrase has special reference to useful art, which learns from nature the precise end at which to aim. In the selection of the end she acts with infallible instinct, and her endeavour to attain it is on the whole successful. But at times she makes mistakes as indeed do the schoolmaster and the physician;<sup>1</sup> failures rather than mistakes they should be called, for the fault is not hers; her rational intention is liable to be frustrated by inherent flaws in the substances with which she is compelled to work. She is subject to limitations, and can only make the best of her material.<sup>2</sup>

The higher we ascend in the scale of being

<sup>1</sup> *Phys.* ii. 8, 199 a 33.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *de Part. Anim.* iv. 10, 687 a 15, ἡ δὲ φύσις ἐκ τῶν ἐνδεχομένων ποιεῖ τὸ βέλτιστον.

the more does nature need assistance in carrying out her designs. Man, who is her highest creation, she brings into the world more helpless than any other animal,—unshod, unclad, unarmed.<sup>1</sup> But in his seeming imperfection lies man's superiority, for the fewer the finished appliances with which he is provided, the greater the intellectual capacity he exhibits. By means of the rational faculty of art, with which nature has endowed him richly, he is able to come to her aid, and in ministering to his own needs to fulfil her uncompleted purposes. Where from any cause nature fails, art steps in. Nature aims at producing health; in her restorative processes we observe an instinctive capacity for self-curing.<sup>2</sup> But she does not always succeed, and the art of the physician makes good the defect. He discovers one of the links of the chain which terminates in health, and uses nature's own machinery to start a series of movements which lead to the desired result.<sup>3</sup> Again, nature has formed man to be a "political animal."<sup>4</sup> Family and tribal life are stages on the way to a more complete existence, and the term of the process is reached when man enters into that

<sup>1</sup> *De Part. Anim.* iv. 10, 687 a 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Phys.* ii. 8, 199 b 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Met.* vi. 7, 1032 b 6 *sqq.*

<sup>4</sup> *Pol.* i. 2, 1253 a 3.



higher order of community called the state. The state is indeed a natural institution, but needs the political art to organise it and to realise nature's full idea. The function, then, of the useful arts is in all cases "to supply the deficiencies of nature";<sup>1</sup> and he who would be a master in any art must first discern the true end by a study of nature's principles, and then employ the method which she suggests for the attainment of that end. "Nature taught Art," says Milton; and the same Aristotelian idea was in the mind of Dante, when he makes Virgil condemn usury as a departure from nature: "Philosophy, to him who hears it, points out not in one place alone, how Nature takes her course from the Divine Intellect, and from its art. And, if thou note well thy Physics

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* iv. (vii.) 17. 1337 a 1-2, πᾶσα γὰρ τέχνη καὶ παιδεία τὸ προσλείπον τῆς φύσεως βούλεται ἀναπληροῦν. The context here, in its reference to education, limits the scope of τέχνη to useful art. In *Phys.* ii. 8. 199 a 15, ἡ τέχνη τὰ μὲν ἐπιτελεῖ ἃ ἡ φύσις ἀδυνατεῖ ἀπεργάσασθαι, τὰ δὲ μιμεῖται it is probable that the distinction is not, as would at first sight seem, between useful and fine art, but between two aspects of useful art. The sentence is not quite logical in form, but the meaning is that useful art on the one hand satisfies those needs of man for which nature has not fully provided, on the other hand its processes are those of nature (μιμεῖται sc. τὴν φύσιν). The two clauses respectively mark the end and the method of useful art. The main argument of the chapter is in favour of this view.

(Arist. *Phys.* ii. 2), thou wilt find, not many pages from the first, that your art as far as it can, follows her (Nature), as the scholar does his master. . . . And because the usurer takes another way, he contemns Nature in herself, and in her follower (Art), placing elsewhere his hope.”<sup>1</sup> The phrase on which we have been commenting is the key to this passage: useful art supplements nature, and at the same time follows her guidance.

The term “fine art” is not one that has been transmitted to us from the Greeks. Their phrase was the “imitative arts” (*μιμητικὰ τέχναι*), “modes of imitation” (*μιμήσεις*), or sometimes the “liberal arts” (*ἐλευθέριοι τέχναι*). Aristotle, finding “imitation” both in popular speech and in literary currency recognised as the common characteristic of the fine arts, adopted it, while, as will be seen later,<sup>2</sup> he deepened and enlarged its significance. But first we may examine what arts he regarded as “imitative.” These are poetry, music in most of its forms, some kinds of dancing, painting, and sculpture.<sup>3</sup> The first three

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno* xi. 97-109, Carlyle's Translation.      <sup>2</sup> See pp. 281 ff.

<sup>3</sup> He applies the term *μιμήσεις* only to poetry and music (*Poet.* I. 2. 1447 a 15), but the constant use of the verb *μιμῆσθαι* or of the adjective *μιμητικός* in connection with the other arts above enumerated proves that all alike are counted as arts of imitation.

constitute a group by themselves,<sup>1</sup> their common element being imitation by means of rhythm—rhythm which admits of being applied to words, sounds, and the movements of the body. The history of these arts bears out the views we find expressed in Greek writers upon the theory of music; it is a witness to the primitive unity of music and poetry, and to the close alliance of the two with dancing. Together they form a natural triad, and illustrate a characteristic of the ancient world to retain as indivisible wholes branches of art or science which the separative spirit of modern thought has broken up into their elements. The intimate fusion of the three arts afterwards known as the “musical” arts,—or rather we should perhaps say, the alliance of music and dancing under the supremacy of poetry,—was exhibited even in the person of the artist. Improvements in the technique of music or in the construction of instruments are associated with many names well known in the history of poetry. The poet, lyric or dramatic, composed the accompaniment as well as wrote the verses; and it was made a reproach against Euripides, who was the first to deviate from the established usage, that he sought the aid

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* I. 2-5.

of Iophon, son of Sophocles, in the musical setting of his dramas. The very word ποιητής "poet" in classical times often implies the twofold character of poet and musician, and in later writers is sometimes used, like our "composer," in strict and limited reference to music. The office, again, of the poet as teacher of the chorus demanded a practical knowledge of all that passed under the comprehensive term "dancing,"—steps, gestures, attitudes, and the varied resources of rhythmical movement. Aeschylus, we are told,<sup>1</sup> "was the inventor of many orchestic attitudes," and it is added that the ancient poets were called orchestic, not only because they trained their choruses, but also because they taught choral dances outside the theatre to such as wished to learn them. "So wise and honourable a thing," says Athenaeus,<sup>2</sup> "was dancing that Pindar calls Apollo the dancer," and he quotes the words: 'Ορχήστ', ἀγλαΐας ἀνάσσω, εὐρυφάρετρον' Ἀπολλων.

The dignity of dancing, admitted by Aristotle and by all Greek tradition, receives its most instructive commentary in Lucian's pamphlet on the subject, which, when due allowance is made for exaggeration and for the playful gravity so charac-

<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus i. 39.

<sup>2</sup> xiv. 26.

teristic of the writer, is still inspired by an old Greek sentiment. Rhetoricians and musicians had already written treatises on the art, and Lucian in handling the same theme imitates their semi-philosophic manner. Dancing is placed in the front rank of the fine arts, and all the sciences are made contributory to it. The dancer must have a fine genius, a critical judgment of poetry, a ready and comprehensive memory ; like Homer's Calchas he must know the past, the present, and the future. Above all he needs to have mastered all mythology from chaos and the origin of the universe down to Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, and to be able to reproduce the legends in their details and in their spirit. He must avoid the "terrible solecisms" of some ignorant performers. Like the orator he should aim at being always perspicuous ; he must be understood though he is dumb and heard though he says nothing. The expressive power of dancing is not inferior to that of tragedy itself ; it is descriptive of every shade of character and emotion. Moreover, it harmonises the soul of the spectator, trains the moral sympathies, and acts as a curative and quieting influence on the passions.

Aristotle does full justice to the force of

rhythmic form and movement in the arts of music and dancing. The instinctive love of melody and rhythm is, again, one of the two causes to which he traces the origin of poetry,<sup>1</sup> but he lays little stress on this element in estimating the finished products of the poetic art. In the *Rhetoric*<sup>2</sup> he observes that if a sentence has metre it will be poetry; but this is said in a popular sense. It was doubtless the received opinion, but it is one which he repeatedly combats in the *Poetics*. There he declares that it is not metrical form that makes a poem.<sup>3</sup> Nay, he seems to go farther and to maintain that you may have a poem without metre.<sup>4</sup> A question has been raised whether he does indeed commit himself to this extreme view,<sup>5</sup> and as there is some uncertainty of reading in a crucial passage of the text it may be rash to assert it dogmatically. But the general tenor of his remarks in the *Poetics* taken in conjunction with a quotation from Aristotle preserved by Athenaeus<sup>6</sup> goes to show that he was inclined to

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 4. 6. 1448 b 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Rhet.* iii. 8. 1408 b 30-1.

<sup>3</sup> *Poet.* 1. 7-8. 1447 b 15 *sqq.*; 9. 2. 1451 b 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Poet.* 1. 5. 1447 a 29 *sqq.*; 9. 9. 1451 b 29.

<sup>5</sup> Prickard, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*, 1891.

<sup>6</sup> Athen. xi. 505 b, on which see Bernays *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Aristotelische Theorie des Drama*, p. 83.

extend the meaning of the word "poet" to include any prose writer whose work was an "imitation" within the artistic meaning of the term. He does not rudely set aside the experience of Greece, to which a poem in prose was a thing unknown; he accepts it, but half-heartedly, and the result is some slight inconsequence or wavering in his point of view. In his definition of tragedy (ch. 6. 2) "embellished language" (ἡδυσμένος λόγος) is included among the constituent elements of tragedy; and the phrase is explained to mean language that has the twofold embellishment of metre (which is a branch of rhythm) and of melody. But these elements are placed in a subordinate rank and are hardly treated as essentials. They are in this respect not unlike scenery (ὄψις), which, though it is deduced by Aristotle from the definition, is not explicitly mentioned in it. The essence of the poetry is the "imitation"; the melody and the verse are the "seasoning"<sup>1</sup> of the language. They hold a position, as Teichmüller observes,<sup>2</sup> similar to that which "external goods" occupy in the Aristotelian definition of

<sup>1</sup> They are ἡδύσματα (cp. ch. 6. 19. 1450 b 16). The metaphor is the same as in Plut. *Symp.* vii. 8. 4, τὸ μέλος καὶ ὁ ῥυθμὸς ὥσπερ ὄψον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristotelische Forschungen*, ii. 364.

happiness. Without them a tragedy may fulfil its function, but would lack its perfect charm and fail in producing its full effect of pleasurable emotion.

Aristotle, highly as he rates the aesthetic capacity of the sense of hearing in his treatment of music, says nothing to show that he values at its proper worth the power of rhythmical sound as a factor in poetry ; and this is the more striking as a Greek, whose enjoyment of poetry came through the ear rather than the eye, and whose poetry was in a sense already music, was not likely to overlook the significance of verse. After all there can hardly be a greater difference between two ways of saying the same thing than that one is said in verse, the other in prose. There are some lyrics which have lived and will always live by their musical charm, and by a strange magic that lies in the setting of the words. We need not agree with a certain modern school who would empty all poetry of poetical thought and etherialise it till it melts into a strain of music ; who sing to us we hardly know of what, but in such a way that the echoes of the real world, its men and women, its actual stir and conflict, are faint and hardly to be discerned. The poetry, we are told,



resides not in the ideas conveyed, not in the blending of soul and sense, but in the sound itself, in the cadence of the verse.

Yet, false as this view may be, it is not perhaps more false than that other which wholly ignores the effect of musical sound and looks only to the thought that is conveyed. Aristotle comes perilously near this doctrine, and was saved from it, we may conjecture,—if indeed he was saved,—only by an instinctive reluctance to bid defiance to the traditional sentiment of Greece.

His omission of architecture from the list of the fine arts may also cause surprise to modern readers; for here, as in sculpture, the artistic greatness of Greece stands undisputed. In this, however, he is merely following the usage of his countrymen who reckoned architecture among the useful arts. It was linked to the practical world. It sprang out of the needs of civic and religious life and the greatest triumphs of the art were connected with public faith and worship. To a Greek the temple, which was the culmination of architectural skill, was the house of the god, the abode of his image, a visible pledge of his protecting presence. At the same time,—and this was the decisive point—architecture had

not the "imitative" quality which was regarded as essential to fine art. Modern writers may tell us that its forms owe their origin to the direct suggestions of the physical world,—of natural caverns or forest arches,—and in the groined roof they may trace a marked resemblance to an avenue of interlacing trees. Such resemblances, however, are much fainter in Greek than in Gothic architecture ; and even if it were not so, the argument from *origin* would here be as much out of place, as it would be to maintain, in relation to music, that the reason why people now enjoy Beethoven is, that their earliest ancestors of arboreal habits found musical notes to be a telling adjunct to love-making. Be the origin of architecture what it may, it is certain that the Greeks did not find its primitive type and model in the outward universe. A building as an organic whole did not call up any image of a world outside itself, though the method of architecture does remind Aristotle of the structural method of nature ; and even if architecture had seemed to him to reproduce the appearances of the physical universe, it would not, as will afterwards be apparent, have satisfied his idea of artistic imitation. The decorative element in Greek architecture is alone "imitative" in the

•Aristotelian sense, being indeed but a form of sculpture ; but sculpture does not constitute the building, nor is it, as in Gothic architecture, an organic part of the whole. The metopes in a Greek temple are, as it were, a setting for a picture, a frame into which sculptural representations may be fitted, but the frame is not always filled in. The temple itself is constructed according to the laws of the beautiful ; it realises, as we might say, the idea of the beautiful, but it is not "imitative ;" it is designed for use ; it does not, according to Greek notions, rank as fine art.

It may be here observed that an attempt has been made to prove that the fundamental principles of fine art are deduced by Aristotle from the idea of the beautiful. But this is to antedate the theory of modern aesthetics, and to read into Aristotle more than any impartial interpretation can find in him. The view cannot be supported except by forced inferences, in which many links of the argument have to be supplied, and by wringing philosophical meanings of far-reaching import out of chance expressions. Aristotle's conception of fine art, so far as it is developed, is entirely detached from any theory of the beautiful—a separation which is characteristic of all ancient

aesthetic criticism down to a late period. Plotinus was the first who seriously attempted to determine the idea of the beautiful as a fundamental problem of art, and with it to solve the difficult and hitherto neglected problem as to the meaning of the ugly. He accordingly based his theory of fine art on a particular conception of the beautiful; but Aristotle is still far removed from this point of view. While he assumes almost as an obvious truth that beauty is indispensable in a work of art, and essential to the attainment of its end, and while he throws out hints as to the component elements of the beautiful,<sup>1</sup> he has nowhere analysed that idea, nor did he perhaps regard the beautiful, in its purely aesthetic sense, as forming a separate domain of philosophic inquiry. It is useless, out of the fragmentary observations Aristotle has left us, to seek to construct a theory of the beautiful. He makes beauty a regulative principle of art, but he never says or implies that the manifestation of the beautiful is the end of art. The objective laws of art are deduced not from an inquiry into the beautiful, but from an observation of art as it is and of the effects which it produces.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* ch. 7. 4. 1450 b 38; *Met.* xiii. 3. 1078 a 36; *Probl.* xvii. 1. 915 b 36; cp. *Plat. Phileb.* 64 E.

## II. THE END OF FINE ART

Before proceeding to determine more nearly the meaning of "imitation," it may be well to distinguish between the ends which the two branches of art propose to themselves. The arts called "useful" either provide the necessary means of existence and satisfy material wants, or furnish life with its full equipment of moral and intellectual resources. Their end is subordinate to another and ulterior end. The end of the fine arts is to give pleasure (πρὸς ἡδονήν) or rational enjoyment<sup>1</sup> (πρὸς δια-

<sup>1</sup> *Met.* i. 1. 981 b 17 *sqq.*, πλειόνων δ' εὕρισκομένων τεχνῶν, καὶ τῶν μὲν πρὸς τάναγκαῖα τῶν δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν οὐσῶν, αἰεὶ σοφωτέρους τοὺς τοιοῦτους ἐκείνων ὑπολαμβάνομεν, διὰ τὸ μὴ πρὸς χρῆσιν εἶναι τὰς ἐπιστήμας αὐτῶν. The liberal arts which adorn life and minister to pleasure are here said to be πρὸς διαγωγὴν, synonymous with which we find πρὸς ἡδονήν b 21. Cp. *Met.* i. 2. 982 b 23, πρὸς ῥαστώνην καὶ διαγωγὴν. In all of these passages the contrasted expression is τάναγκαῖα. Διαγωγή properly means the employment of leisure and in Aristotle fluctuates between the higher and lower kinds of pleasurable activity. In the lower sense it is combined in *Eth. Nic.* iv. 14. 1127 b 34 with παιδιὰ and is part of ἀνάπανσις; it denotes the more playful forms of social intercourse; in x. 6. 1176 b 12, 14 it is used of the παιδιὰ of the rich and great; in x. 6. 1177 a 9, οὐ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις διαγωγαῖς ἡ εὐδαιμονία, it has a baser application to σωματικαὶ ἡδοναί. As an elevated and noble enjoyment it is associated with σχολή in *Pol.* iv. (vii.) 15. 1334 a 16. Under this aspect it admits of special application to the two spheres of art and of philosophy. In *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1339 a 25 it is joined with

γωγῆν). A useful art like that of cookery may happen to produce pleasure, but that is no part of its essence ; just as the fine arts may incidentally produce useful results and become moral instruments in the hands of the legislator. In neither case is the result to be confounded with the true end of the art. The pleasure, however, which is derived from an art may be of a higher or lower kind, for Aristotle recognises specific differences between pleasures. There is the harmless pleasure,<sup>1</sup> which is afforded by a recreation (ἀνάπαυσις) or a pastime (παιδιά) ; but a pastime is not an end in itself, it is the rest that fits the busy man for fresh exertion, and is of value as a means to further work ; it has in it no element of that well-

φρόνησις and stands for the higher aesthetic enjoyment which music affords. From a 30-31 it appears that the musical διαγωγῆ is an end in itself, and therefore distinct from a παιδιά. In *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5 1339 b 14 *sqq.* three ends are mentioned which music may serve—παιδεία, παιδιά, and διαγωγῆ, and the last is said to combine τὸ καλὸν with ἡδονή, both of which elements enter into εὐδαιμονία. Its reference is to the life of thought in *Eth. Nic.* x. 7. 1177 a 27, where it is applied to the activity of the speculative reason, and in *Met.* xii. 7. 1072 b 14, where it denotes the activity of the divine thought. Thus the higher διαγωγῆ, artistic or philosophic, is the delight which comes from the ideal employment of leisure (cp. τὴν ἐν τῇ σχολῇ διαγωγὴν *Pol.* v. (viii.) 3. 1338 a 21) ; it is among the blissful moments which constitute εὐδαιμονία. Cp. *Pol.* v. (viii.) 3. 1338 a 1, τὸ δὲ σχολάζειν ἔχειν αὐτὸ δοκεῖ τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν καὶ τὸ ζῆν μακαρίως.

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1339 b 25

being or happiness which is the supreme end of life.<sup>1</sup> Though Aristotle does not assign to the different types of art their respective ranks, or expressly say that the pleasure of tragedy is superior to that of comedy, the distinction he draws between various forms of music may be taken as indicating the criterion by which he would judge of other arts. Music, apart from its moral function and from its "cathartic" influence, may serve as an amusement for children, it is a toy which takes the place of the infant's rattle;<sup>2</sup> or, again, it may afford a noble and rational enjoyment and become an element of the highest happiness to an audience that is capable of appreciating it.<sup>3</sup> Again, Aristotle asserts that the ludicrous in general is inferior to the serious,<sup>4</sup> and ranks as a pastime that fits men for serious work. We may probably infer that the same principle holds in literature as in life; that comedy is merely a form of sportive activity and serves ends and aims outside itself; the pleasure derived from it is of corresponding quality, it ranks with the other pleasures of sport or recreation. But

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* x. 6. 1176 b 27 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1339 b 13-17; 6. 1340 b 30.

<sup>3</sup> See note 3, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> *Eth. Nic.* x. 6. 1177 a 3.

art in its highest idea is one of the serious activities of the mind which constitute the final well-being of man. Its end is pleasure, but a pleasure which belongs to that state of rational enjoyment in which perfect repose is united with perfect energy. It is not to be confounded with the pleasure afforded by the rude imitations of early art, arising, according to Aristotle, from the discovery of a likeness, which gratifies man's instinct for knowledge, and which remains a factor—Aristotle seems to say the chief factor—in the enjoyment of some at least of the more developed forms of art.<sup>1</sup> In the recognition of workmanlike skill he elsewhere finds the reason why we enjoy plastic or pictorial imitations of the lower forms of animal life, and an analogy is indicated between this pleasure and that which comes from the contemplation of nature in her adaptation of means to ends.<sup>2</sup> It may well be that Aristotle laid more stress than we should be disposed to do on the purely intellectual pleasure that certain branches of art afford. But in his treatment of poetry, which holds the sovereign place among fine arts,

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 4. 3-5. 1448 b 9 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> See the passage quoted p. 284 from *de Part. Anim.* i. 5. 645 a, especially the words τὰς μὲν εἰκόνας αὐτῶν θεωροῦντες χαίρομεν ὅτι τὴν δημιουργήσασαν τέχνην συνθεωροῦμεν.



he makes it plain that aesthetic enjoyment proper proceeds from an emotional rather than from an intellectual source. The main appeal is not to the reason but to the feelings. In a word, fine art and philosophy, while they occupy distinct territory, each find their complete fruition in a region bordering on the other. The glow of feeling which accompanies the contemplation of what is perfect in art is an elevated delight similar in quality to the glow of speculative thought. Each is a moment of joy complete in itself, and belongs to the ideal sphere of supreme happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Some points of difference between Plato and Aristotle are at once apparent. Pleasure to Plato was a word of base associations and a democratic pleasure was doubly ignoble. An imitative art like music is condemned, if for no other reason,

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Art*, translated by B. Bosanquet, London, 1886, p. 12: "It is no doubt the case that art can be employed as a fleeting pastime, to serve the ends of pleasure and entertainment, to decorate our surroundings, to impart pleasantness to the external conditions of our life, and to emphasise other objects by means of ornament. In this mode of employment art is indeed not independent, not free, but servile. But what we mean to consider is the art which is free in its end as in its means. . . . Fine art is not real art till it is in this sense free, and only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy."

because it seeks to please the masses.<sup>1</sup> Poetry, again, has something of the same taint; it is a kind of rhetoric, a pleasant flattery addressed to mixed audiences,<sup>2</sup> and falls therefore into the same group with the art of sophistry, the art of personal adornment, and the art of the pastry-cook, all of which look not to what is best or truly wholesome but to the pleasure of the moment.<sup>3</sup> The vulgar opinion that musical excellence is measured by pleasure seems to Plato a sort of blasphemy;<sup>4</sup> if pleasure is to be taken as a criterion at all it should be that of the "one man pre-eminent in virtue and education."<sup>5</sup> Even in the *Philebus* where the claims of pleasure, and especially of aesthetic pleasure, are more carefully analysed and weighed than elsewhere, the highest or unmixed pleasures rank but fifth in the scale of goods. Aristotle does not share Plato's distrust of pleasure. In the *Ethics* while he admits to the full its power to mislead the judgment, and compares its gracious but dangerous influence to that of Helen among the elders of Troy;<sup>6</sup> while he speaks slightly of the pleasures of the mass of men who "can

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* ii. 659 A-C.

<sup>2</sup> *Gorg.* 502 D.

<sup>3</sup> *Gorg.* 462 E-463 B. Cp. *Rep.* ii. 373 B-C.

<sup>4</sup> *Laws* ii. 655 D.

<sup>5</sup> *Laws* ii. 659 A.

<sup>6</sup> *Eth. Nic.* ii. 9. 1109 b 9.

form no idea of the noble and the truly pleasant whereof they have never tasted,"<sup>1</sup> yet he insists on the necessity of being trained to feel pleasure and pain at the right objects; he never hints that pleasure ought to be suppressed as in itself an evil; nay, it is a normal accompaniment of the exercise of every healthy organ and faculty, it perfects that exercise as an added completeness, "like the bloom of health on the face of the young."<sup>2</sup> In the passage of the *Metaphysics* already referred to (i. 1) the discoverers of the fine arts are said to be "wiser" than the discoverers of the useful arts for the very reason that the former arts minister to pleasure not to use.

Again to Plato poetry and painting and the companion arts, as affording at the best a harmless pleasure,<sup>3</sup> are of the nature of a pastime,<sup>4</sup>—a pastime, it may be, more "artistic and graceful"<sup>5</sup> than any other kind, but which still con-

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* x. 10. 1179 b 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Eth. Nic.* x. 4. 1174 b 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Laws* ii. 667 E, ἀβλαβῆ λέγεις ἡδονὴν μόνον. The same phrase is used by Aristotle in reference to music as a pastime, *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1339 b 25, ὅσα γὰρ ἀβλαβῆ τῶν ἡδέων.

<sup>4</sup> *Polit.* 288 C. Every such art may be called παλγνιόν τι, "a plaything," οὐ γὰρ σπουδῆς οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ παιδιᾶς ἕνεκα πάντα δρᾶται. So *Rep.* 602 B.

<sup>5</sup> *Soph.* 234 B, παιδιᾶς δὲ ἔχεις ἢ τι τεχνικώτερον ἢ καὶ χαριέστερον εἶδος ἢ τὸ μιμητικόν;

trasts unfavourably with medicine, husbandry, and gymnastics, which have a serious purpose and co-operate with nature.<sup>1</sup> Imitative art, in short, is wanting in moral earnestness; it is a jest, a sport, child's play upon the surface of things. Aristotle distinguishes as we have seen between art as a pastime and art as a rational employment of leisure. Comedy and the lower forms of art he would probably rank as a pastime, but not so art in its higher manifestations. Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is the very opposite of a pastime, a serious action (*πράξεως σπουδαίας*), which is concerned with the supreme good or end of life; and the art which reproduces this aspect of life is itself a serious art.

The end, then, of fine art, according to Aristotle's doctrine, is a certain pleasurable impression produced upon the mind of the hearer or the spectator. We must be careful here not to import the later idea that the artist works merely for his own enjoyment, that the inward satisfaction which the creative act affords is for him the end of his art. No such conception of the artist's dignity was formed in Greece, where in truth the artist was honoured less than his art. His professional

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* x. 889 D.

skill seemed to want something of a self-sufficing and independent activity; and though the poet stood higher in popular estimation than his fellow-artists, because he did not, like the painter and sculptor, approach to the condition of a manual labourer or as a rule make a trade of his work, he too was one who worked not for himself but for others, and so far fell short of a gentlemanly leisure. Aristotle's theory has regard to the pleasure not of the maker, but of the spectator (*θεατῆς*) who contemplates the finished product. Thus while the pleasures of philosophy are for him who philosophises—for the intellectual act is an end in itself—the pleasures of art are not for the artist but for those who enjoy what he creates; or if the artist shares at all in the distinctive pleasure which belongs to his art, he does so not as an artist but as one of the public.

To those who are familiar with modern modes of thinking it may seem a serious defect in the theory of Aristotle that he makes the end of art to reside in a pleasurable emotion, not in the realisation of a certain objective character that is necessary to the perfection of the work. An artistic creation, it may be said, is complete in itself; its end is immanent not transcendental.

The effect that it produces, whether that effect be immediate or remote, whether it be pleasure or moral improvement, has nothing to do with the object as it is in its essence and inmost character. The true artist concerns himself with external effects as little as does nature herself in the vital processes which are directed towards an end. It was a signal merit, we are reminded, in Aristotle's general philosophical system, that the end of an object is inherent in that object, and is reached when the object has achieved its specific excellence and fulfils the law of its own being.<sup>1</sup> Why, it is said, did not Aristotle see that a painting or a poem, like a natural organism, attains its end not through some external effect but in realising its own idea? If the end of art is to be found in a certain emotional effect, in a pleasure which is purely subjective, the end becomes something arbitrary and accidental, and dependent on each individual's moods. Plato had already shown the way to a truer conception of fine art, for greatly as he misjudged the poetry of his own country, yet he had in his mind the vision of a higher art which should reveal to sense the world of ideas.

<sup>1</sup> *Phys.* ii. 2. 194 a 28, ἡ δὲ φύσις τέλος καὶ οὐ ἕνεκα. So *Pol.* i. 2. 1252 b 32.

Here there was at least an objective end for fine art. Aristotle's own definition too of art as "a faculty of production in accordance with a true idea"<sup>1</sup> is quoted as showing that he was not far from assigning to fine art an end more consistent with his whole system. If art in general is the faculty of realising a true idea in external form, he might easily have arrived at a definition of fine art not essentially different from the modern conception of it as the revelation of the beautiful in the external form.

To this it may be replied that a work of fine art is in its nature an appeal to the mind and imagination of the person to whom it is presented ; its perfection and success depend on a subjective impression, and its essential quality is most faithfully expressed in terms of the emotion which it awakens. This view does not, however, make the function of art to depend upon accident and individual caprice. The subjective emotion is deeply grounded in human nature, and thence acquires a kind of objective validity. As in ethics Aristotle assumes a man of moral insight (*ὁ φρόνιμος*) to whose trained judgment the appreciation of ethical questions is submitted, and who, in the last resort,

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* vi. 4. 1140 a 10, *ἕξις μετὰ λόγον ἀληθοῦς ποιητική.*

becomes the "standard and the law" of right,<sup>1</sup> so too in fine art a man of sound aesthetic instincts (ὁ χαριεὺς) is assumed, who is the standard of taste, and to him the final appeal is made. He is no mere expert, for Aristotle distrusts the verdict of specialists in the arts<sup>2</sup> and prefers the popular judgment; but it must be the judgment of a cultivated public. Both in the *Politics* and in the *Poetics* he distinguishes between the lower and the higher kind of audience.<sup>3</sup> The "free and educated listener" at a musical performance is opposed to one of the vulgar sort. Each class of audience enjoys a different kind of music and derives from the performance such pleasure as it is capable of. The inferior kind of enjoyment is not to be denied to those who can appreciate only the inferior type of music—better that they should like this music than none at all—but the lower pleasure is not to be taken as the true end of the musical art.<sup>4</sup> In the theatre, again, it is noted

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* iii. 6. 1113 a 33, the σπονδαῖος is ὥσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρον.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Pol.* iii. 11. 1282 a 1-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1342 a 18-28, ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ θεατῆς διττός, ὁ μὲν ἐλεύθερος καὶ πεπαιδευμένος, ὁ δὲ φορτικός κ.τ.λ. In *Poet.* 26. 1, ἡ πρὸς βέλτους θεατὰς μίμησις ἡττον φορτική.

<sup>4</sup> In *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1340 a 1-2, the universal pleasure given by music is called ἡ κοινὴ ἡδονή and is φυσική. It is distinct from the higher kind of pleasure.



that tragic poets are tempted to gratify the weakness of their audience by making happy endings to their tragedies. The practice is not entirely forbidden; only, it is insisted, such compositions do not afford the characteristic tragic pleasure, but one that properly belongs to comedy.<sup>1</sup> In fine, the end of any art is not "any chance pleasure,"<sup>2</sup> but the pleasure which is distinctive of the art. To the ideal spectator or listener, who is a man of educated taste and represents an instructed public, every fine art addresses itself; he may be called "the rule and standard" of that art, as the man of moral insight is of morals; the pleasure that any given work of art affords to him is the end of the art. Though the end, then, is a state of feeling, it is a state which belongs to normal humanity. The hedonistic effect is not alien to the essence of the art, as has sometimes been thought; it is the subjective aspect of a real

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 13. 7-8. 1453 a 33 *sqq.*, δοκεῖ δὲ εἶναι πρώτη διὰ τὴν τῶν θεάτρων ἀσθένειαν, . . . ἔστιν δὲ οὐχ αὕτη <ή> ἀπὸ τραγωδίας ἡδονὴ ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τῆς κωμωδίας οἰκεία, where <ή> is a necessary correction.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 14. 2. 1453 b 10, οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγωδίας ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. 26. 7. 1462 b 13, δεῖ γὰρ οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν αὐτὰς (*i.e.* tragedy and epic poetry) ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρημένην: with which cp. *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1339 b 32, ἔχει γὰρ ἴσως ἡδονὴν τινα καὶ τὸ τέλος, ἀλλ' οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν.

objective fact. Each kind of poetry carries with it a distinctive pleasure, which is the criterion by which the work is judged. A tragic action has an inherent capacity of calling forth pity and fear; this quality must be impressed by the poet on the dramatic material;<sup>1</sup> and if it is artistically done, the peculiar pleasure arising out of the union of the pitiable and the terrible will be awakened in the mind of every one who possesses normal human sympathies and faculties. The test of artistic merit in a tragedy is the degree in which it fulfils this, its distinctive function. All the rules prescribed for the tragic poet flow from the same primary requirement,—those which determine the proper construction of the plot, the character of the ideal hero, the best form of recognition and the like. The state of pleasurable feeling is not an accidental result, but is inherently related to the object which calls it forth. Though the pleasure of the percipient is necessary to the fulfilment of the function of any art, the subjective impression has in it a permanent and universal element.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 14. 3. 1453 b 11, ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως δεῖ ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν τὸν ποιητὴν, φανερόν ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐμποιεῖται.

### III. THE MEANING OF "IMITATION" AS AN AESTHETIC TERM

So far we have seen that fine art is a mode of imitation whose end is to give pleasure ; we must now more nearly determine what is meant by "imitation." *A work of art is a copy or likeness of an original, and not a symbolic representation of it.*<sup>1</sup> The distinction may be shown by Aristotle's own illustrations. A sign or symbol has no essential resemblance, no natural connection, with the thing signified. Thus spoken words are symbols of mental states, written words are symbols of spoken words ; the connection between them is conventional.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand mental impressions are not signs or symbols but copies of external reality, likenesses of the things themselves. In the act of sensuous perception objects stamp upon the mind an impress of themselves like that of a signet ring, and the picture (φάντασμα) so engraven on the memory is com-

<sup>1</sup> This point is worked out in detail by Teichmüller, *Aristotelische Forschungen*, ii. 145-154.

<sup>2</sup> *De Interpret.* i. 1. 16 a 3, ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ. In ch. 2. 16 a 27 the connection is said to be κατὰ συνθήκην.

pared to a portrait (ζωγράφημα, εἰκόν).<sup>1</sup> While all works of art are likenesses of an original and have reference to a world outside themselves, recalling objects independently known to us, the various arts reflect the image from without by different means, and with more or less clearness and directness. The common original, however, from which they all draw, is human life. Aristotle does not conceive of the whole universe as the raw material of art. His theory is in agreement with the practice of the Greek poets and artists, with whose works he was familiar, who introduce the external world only so far as it forms a background of action, and enters as an emotional element into man's life and heightens the human interest. Of all the arts poetry alone can give adequate expression to the facts of life and reproduce its higher aspects, but each art in its own degree aims at presenting some side of this complex whole. Even dancing, as we have seen, can represent character, emotion, action (ἦθη, πάθη, πράξεις), and may take its place among the fine arts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Mem. et Remin.* I. 450 a 27-451 a 17. Cp. *de Interpret.* i. 16 a 7, where the παθήματα or mental impressions are said to be ὁμοιώματα of reality.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* I. 5. 1447 a 29.

Music in most of its forms was, by Aristotle, as by the Greeks generally, regarded as the most "imitative" or representative of the arts. It is a direct image, a copy of character. We generally think of music quite otherwise. The emotion it suggests, the message it conveys, corresponds but little with a reality outside itself, with a world of feeling already known. We cannot test its truth by its accordance with any original. It is capable of expressing general and elementary moods of feeling, which will be variously interpreted by different hearers. It cannot render the finer shades of extra-musical emotion with any degree of certainty and precision. Its expressive power, its capacity to reproduce independent realities, is weak in proportion as the impression it produces is vivid and definite. But to Aristotle, who here accepts the traditions of his country, the very opposite seems true. Music is the express image and reflection of moral character. "In rhythms and melodies we have the most realistic imitations of anger and mildness as well as of courage, temperance and all their opposites."<sup>1</sup> Not only states

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 1340 a 18, ἔστι δὲ ὁμοιώματα μάλιστα παρὰ τὰς ἀληθινὰς φύσεις ἐν τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς καὶ τοῖς μέλεσιν ὀργῆς καὶ πραότητος ἔτι δ' ἀνδρίας καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων τούτοις.

of feeling but also strictly ethical qualities and dispositions of mind are reproduced by musical imitation, and on the close correspondence between the copy and the original depends the importance of music in the formation of character. Music in reflecting character moulds and influences it.

A partial explanation of the prevalence of such a view is to be found in the dependent position which music occupied among the Greeks. It was one of the accessories of poetry, to which it was strictly subordinate, and consisted of comparatively simple strains. Much of its meaning was derived from the associations it called up, and from the emotional atmosphere which surrounded it. It was associated with definite occasions and solemnities, it was accompanied by certain dances and attached to well-known words. "When there are no words," says Plato, "it is very difficult to recognise the meaning of harmony or rhythm, or to see that any worthy object is imitated by them."<sup>1</sup> But even apart from interpretative words it would seem that the ethical significance of music was maintained by Aristotle and his school. In the *Problems* we find it said, "melody even apart from

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* ii. 669 E.

words denotes character.”<sup>1</sup> Though we may not be able entirely to comprehend the Greek point of view as to the moral import of music, we must bear in mind that the dominant element in Greek music was the rhythm; the spirit and meaning of any given composition was felt to reside here; and the doctrine which asserted the unique imitative capacity of music had for Aristotle its theoretic basis in this, that the external movements of rhythmical sound bear a close resemblance to the internal movements of the soul.<sup>2</sup>

This power which belongs in an eminent degree to the sense of hearing is but feebly exhibited by the other senses. Taste and touch do not directly reflect moral qualities; sight, but little, for figures and colours are “rather signs of moral qualities”

<sup>1</sup> *Probl.* xix. 27 p. 919 b 26, καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ᾗ ἀνευ λόγου μέλος, ὁμῶς ἔχει ἦθος.

<sup>2</sup> In *Probl.* xix. 29 p. 920 a 3, the question is asked, διὰ τί οἱ ῥυθμοὶ καὶ τὰ μέλη φωνῇ οὔσα ἡθεσιν ἔοικεν; and the answer suggested is ἡ ὅτι κινήσεις εἰσὶν ὥσπερ καὶ αἱ πράξεις; ἥδη δὲ ἡ μὲν ἐνέργεια ἡθικὸν καὶ ποιεῖ ἦθος. Again in *Probl.* xix. 27 p. 919 b 26, the similar question διὰ τί τὸ ἀκουστὸν μόνον ἦθος ἔχει τῶν αἰσθητῶν; is put, and again the answer is ἡ ὅτι κίνησιν ἔχει μόνον . . .; It is added αἱ δὲ κινήσεις αἰσται πρακτικαὶ εἰσιν, αἱ δὲ πράξεις ἦθους σημασία ἐστίν. A distinction is further drawn between the κινήσεις produced by sight and by hearing, but the precise meaning is not beyond dispute and need not detain us here.

than actual imitations of them.<sup>1</sup> This passage of the *Politics* would seem to imply that painting and sculpture directly render little more than the outward and physical features of an object, and that they convey moral and spiritual facts almost wholly by signs or symbols. Here, it might be thought, we are introduced to a type of art foreign to the mind of Greece, an art in which the inner qualities are shadowed forth in outward forms, with which they are conventionally associated, but which suggest no obvious and immediate resemblance. But the phrase here used, like many of Aristotle's *obiter dicta*, must be taken with considerable latitude and in conjunction with other passages. Some emphasis, too, must be laid on the admission that figures and colours do, in however slight a degree, reflect the moral character, and on the qualifying "rather" prefixed to the statement that they are "signs of moral qualities."

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. 1340 a 28, συμβέβηκε δὲ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις μηδὲν ὑπάρχειν ὁμολωμα τοῖς ἡθεσιν, οἷον ἐν τοῖς ἀπτοῖς καὶ τοῖς γενεστοῖς, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς ὁρατοῖς ἡρέμα· σχήματα γὰρ ἐστι τοιαῦτα, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ μικρὸν, . . . ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα τῶν ἡθῶν, ἀλλὰ σημεῖα μᾶλλον τὰ γινόμενα σχήματα καὶ χρώματα τῶν ἡθῶν. The two passages just quoted from the *Problems* go farther and declare that sound alone carries with it any immediate suggestion of moral qualities; sight, taste and smell are expressly excluded. This is perhaps an exaggeration of the proper Aristotelian view.



They are indeed less perfect manifestations of these qualities than music whose rhythmical and ordered movements have a special affinity with the nature of the soul, and reproduce with most directness the moral life, which is itself an activity, a movement.<sup>1</sup> Still facial expression, gestures, attitudes, are a dialect which nature herself has taught, and which needs no skilled interpreter to expound. They are in the truest sense a natural, not an artificial medium of expression, and convey their meaning by the force of immediate suggestion and without a conscious process of inference. If symbols they may be called, they are not conventional symbols, but living signs through which the outward frame follows and reflects the movements of the spirit; they are a visible token of the inner unity of body and soul.

The reading of character by gesture and facial expression, as explained by the Aristotelian school,

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. p. 1340 b 18, *καὶ τις ἔοικε συγγένεια ταῖς ἁρμονίαις καὶ τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς εἶναι*, where the sense, as the context shows, is that harmonies and rhythms have a certain affinity *with the soul*. Hence, Aristotle proceeds, some have wrongly inferred that the soul itself is a harmony. Cp. *Probl.* xix. 38, 920 b 33, *ῥυθμῷ δὲ χαίρομεν διὰ τὸ γινώριμον καὶ τεταγμένον ἀριθμὸν ἔχειν, καὶ κινεῖν ἡμᾶς τεταγμένως* \* οἰκειότερα γὰρ ἢ τεταγμένη κίνησις φύσει τῆς ἀτάκτου, ὥστε καὶ κατὰ φύσιν μᾶλλον. *Plat. Tim.* 47 D, *ἡ δὲ ἁρμονία ξυγγενεῖς ἔχουσα φεράς ταῖς ἐν ἡμῖν τῆς ψυχῆς περιδόει*.

rests on an assumed harmony not in the case of hearing only but of other organs of sense also, between the movements within and those without.<sup>1</sup> The comparisons, moreover, elsewhere made between painting and poetry as expressive of character cease to be relevant if we suppose that form and colour have no natural, as distinct from a conventional, significance in rendering the phenomena of mind.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle no doubt holds that sound is unequalled in its power of direct expression, but he does not deny that colour and form too have a similar capacity though in an inferior degree. The instinctive movements of the limbs, the changes of colour produced on the surface of the body, are something more than symbols; they imply that the body is of itself responsive to the

<sup>1</sup> *Physiognom.* i. 2. 806 a 28, ἔκ τε γὰρ τῶν κινήσεων φυσιογνωμονοῦσι, καὶ ἐκ τῶν σχημάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν χρωμάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἡθῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου ἐμφαινόμενων. 806 b 28, τὰ δὲ σχήματα καὶ τὰ παθήματα τὰ ἐπιφαινόμενα ἐπὶ τῶν προσώπων κατὰ τὰς ὁμοιότητας λαμβάνεται τῷ πάθει.

<sup>2</sup> The statement in *Pol.* v. (viii.) 5. p. 1340 a 37 that Polygnotus is ἡθικός should be read in connection with *Poet.* 2. i. 1448 a 5, and 6. ii. 1450 a 27, where a parallel is instituted between the character-drawing of poets and of painters, and where the method and faculty of Polygnotus are shown to have their counterpart in poetry. The force of the illustration would be lost if painting in its delineation of character were a purely symbolic, as opposed to an imitative or expressive art.

animating soul, which leaves its trace on the visible organism. Painting and sculpture working in an inert material cannot indeed reproduce the life of the soul in all its variety and successive manifestations. In their frozen and arrested movement they fix eternally the feeling they pourtray. A single typical moment is seized and becomes representative of all that precedes or follows. Still shape and line and colour even here retain something of their significance, they are in their own degree a natural image of the mind; and their meaning is helped out by symmetry, which in the arts of repose answers to rhythm, the chief vehicle of expression in the arts of movement. Aristotle does not himself notice the analogy between dancing and sculpture, which is brought out by later writers, but he would have perfectly apprehended the feeling which suggested the saying, "the statues of the classic artists are the relics of ancient dancing."<sup>1</sup> The correspondence lies in the common element of rhythmic form. This which was the soul of Greek music and Greek dancing would not on Aristotle's general principles lose all its expressive power when transferred to

<sup>1</sup> Athen. xiv. 26 p. 629, ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων δημιουργῶν ἀγάλματα τῆς παλαιᾶς ὀρχήσεως λείψανα.

the material of the plastic arts, modified though it may be in the transference.

Poetry unlike the other arts produces its effects (except such as depend on metre) through symbols alone. It cannot directly present form and colour to the senses ; it must employ signs which call up images of the external objects. Whether it be the material universe or the inner world of feeling which is to be represented, words are the vehicle of expression. Nor are the sign and the thing signified so linked together by obvious suggestion that their meaning is at once and everywhere apprehended ; they vary with race and country and cannot claim to be a universal language. Yet poetry, though it makes use of symbols which have to be interpreted by the mind, is no exception to Aristotle's principle that fine art is not a body of symbols. The image it presents is not one which through artificial means or remote association reminds us of a reality already known. Though dependent on signs it is not a symbolical representation ; for its signs are those significant words which in life are the natural and familiar medium by which thought and feeling are revealed. The world which poetry creates is not expressly stated by Aristotle to be a likeness or

ὁμοίωμα of an original, but this is implied all through the *Poetics*. The original which it reflects is human action and character in all their diversity of manifestation ; no other art has equal range of subject-matter, or can present so complete and satisfying an image of its original. It is in the drama that the poetic imitation of life attains its perfect form ; the imitation there is most direct and obvious ; it is not merely a resemblance between feelings independently experienced and those which are awakened by the fictitious representation ; the speech of real life has its counterpart in speech, and, if the play is put on the stage, action is rendered by action. Indeed the term imitation as applied to poetry was probably suggested to the Greeks by those forms of poetry in which acting or recitation gave prominence to this idea.

But we must advance a step in the argument. *A work of art reproduces its original, not as it is in itself and in its inmost being, but as it appears to the senses.* For art addresses itself not to the abstract reason but to the sensibility and the imagination ; it is concerned with the outward appearances of things ; it employs illusions ; its world is not that which is revealed by pure

thought; it sees realities but in their concrete manifestations, not as abstract ideas. The creations of art are "pictures" (φαντάσματα) which exist for the "phantasy;" of which faculty, however, Aristotle's account is not quite clear or consistent. It is "defined by Aristotle as 'the movement which results upon an actual sensation:' more simply we may define it as the after-effect of a sensation, the continued presence of an impression after the object which first excited it has been withdrawn from actual experience."<sup>1</sup> As such it is brought in to explain the illusions of dreaming and other kindred phenomena. But it is more than a receptivity of sense, it is on the borderline between sense and thought. It is treated as an image-forming faculty, by which we can recall at will pictures previously presented to the mind<sup>2</sup> and may even accomplish some of the processes of thought.<sup>3</sup> If in default of a nearer equivalent we call it "imagination," that is, an image-making faculty, we must remember that Aristotle's psychology takes no account of the creative imagination,

<sup>1</sup> E. Wallace, *Aristotle's Psychology*, Intr. p. lxxxvii.: see the whole section relating to this subject, p. lxxxvi.-xcvii. The definition is in *de Anim.* iii. 3. 429 a 1, ἡ φαντασία ἀν εἴη κίνησις ὑπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τῆς κατ' ἐνέργειαν γυγνομένη. So *de Somno* I. 459 a 17.

<sup>2</sup> *De Anim.* iii. 3. 427 b 17-20. <sup>3</sup> *De Anim.* iii. 10. 433 a 10.

which not merely reproduces objects passively perceived, but fuses together the things of thought and sense, and forms a new world of its own, recombining and transmuting the materials of experience.<sup>1</sup>

Important consequences follow from the doctrine firmly apprehended by Aristotle, that fine art does not attempt to embody the objective reality of things, but only their sensible appearances. Moving in a world of semblances and shadows, and creating after the pattern of an image existing in the mind, it must be skilled in the use of illusions; otherwise it cannot give coherence to its own creations or make its fictions wear the air of reality. While the poetic imagination ought as a rule to exclude occurrences which reason disallows, and which would be termed impossible in actual life, yet what is in itself impossible may have appearances in its favour and win belief. Chance, therefore, which has no proper place in tragedy,

<sup>1</sup> The nearest approach in Greek literature to the idea of the imagination as a creative faculty is probably to be found in Philostratus (*circa* 210 A.D.), *Vit. Apoll.* vi. 19, where *φαντασία* is opposed to *μιμησις*. *φαντασία*, ἔφη, τὰντα (*i.e.* the sculptured forms of the gods by a Pheidias or Praxiteles) *εἰργάσατο σοφωτέρα μιμήσεως δημιουργός*· *μιμησις μὲν γὰρ δημιουργήσῃ δὲ εἶδεν, φαντασία δὲ καὶ δὲ μὴ εἶδεν*.

may be admitted into the plot if the appearance of unreason is removed, and if purpose seems to show through.<sup>1</sup> Homer, again, is held up to other poets as a model of the right way of employing fiction.<sup>2</sup> So far is this doctrine of artistic appearances carried that the poet working by illusions "ought to prefer probable impossibilities to possible improbabilities."<sup>3</sup>

From the course of the foregoing argument we gather that a work of art is a copy of the impressions or "phantasy pictures" made by an external reality upon the mind of the artist, the reality thus reflected being the facts of human life and human nature. To this we must add one qualification, which contains the most vital point of Aristotle's doctrine. *Imitative art in its highest form, namely poetry, is an expression of the universal element*

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 12. 1452 a 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 24. 9. 1460 a 18, δεδίδαχεν δὲ μάλιστα "Ὅμηρος καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ψευδῇ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ. Plutarch similarly insists on τὸ ψεῦδος and τὸ πιθανόν as an ingredient of poetry, e.g. *de Aud. Poet.* ch. 2, οὕτως ἐν ποιήμασι μεμιγμένον πιθανότητι ψεῦδος ἐκπλήττει, *sqq.*, and ch. 7, τῆς μιμήσεως ἐν τῷ πιθανῷ τὸ ἀγωγὸν ἐχούσης.

<sup>3</sup> *Poet.* 24. 10. 1460 a 26, προαιρεῖσθαι τε δεῖ ἀδύνατα εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ ἀπίθانا. Strictly speaking no ἀδύνατα can be εἰκότα for τὸ εἶκος = τὸ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ (see p. 292): here therefore the ἀδύνατα are those that *seem* εἰκότα, — in other words ἀδύνατα πιθανά. The more correct phrase is used ch. 25. 17. 1461 b 11, αἰρετώτερον πιθανὸν ἀδύνατον ἢ ἀπίθανον καὶ δυνατόν.



*in human life.*<sup>1</sup> If we may expand Aristotle's idea in the light of his own system,—fine art eliminates what is transient and particular and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original. It discovers the “form” towards which an object tends, the result which nature strives to attain, but rarely or never can attain. Beneath the individual it detects the type. It passes beyond the bare reality given by nature, and expresses a purified form of reality, disengaged from accident, and free from conditions which thwart its development. The real and the ideal from this point of view are not opposites, as they are sometimes conceived of. The ideal is the real, but rid of contradictions, unfolding itself according to the laws of its own being apart from alien influences and the disturbances of chance. Art therefore in imitating the universal imitates the ideal; and we can now describe *a work of art as an idealised copy of human life—of character, emotion, action—under forms manifest to sense.*

“Imitation,” in the sense in which Aristotle applies the word to poetry, is thus seen to be equivalent to “producing” or “creating according to a true idea,” which forms part of the definition

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 3. 1451 b 6.

of art in general.<sup>1</sup> The "true idea" for fine art is derived from the εἶδος or "ideal form," which is present in each individual phenomenon, but is imperfectly manifested. This form impresses itself as a sensuous appearance on the mind of the artist; he seeks to give it a more complete expression, to bring to light the ideal which is only half revealed in the world of reality. His distinctive work as an artist consists in stamping the given material with the impress of the form which is universal. The process is not simply that which is described by Socrates in the conversation he is reported to have held in the studio of Parrhasius, by which the artist, who is no servile copyist, brings together many elements of beauty which are dispersed in nature.<sup>2</sup> It is not enough to select, combine, embellish, to add here and to retrench there. The elements must be harmonised into an ideal unity of type. The idea, the form, is visibly present to the mind of the artist before he finds for it sensuous embodiment. "Imitation," so understood, is a creative act. It is the expression of the concrete thing under an image which answers to its true idea.

<sup>1</sup> P. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Xen. *Mem.* iii. 10. Cp. Arist. *Pol.* iii. 11. 1281 b 12.

To seize the universal, and to reproduce it in simple and sensuous form is not to reflect a reality already familiar through sense perception ; rather it is a rivalry of nature, a completion of her unfulfilled purposes, a correction of her failures.

If, however, the "imitation" which is the principle of fine art ultimately resolves itself into an effort to complete in some sense the work of nature, how, then, it may be asked, does fine art, after all, differ from useful art? We have seen that the character of the useful arts is to co-operate with nature, to complete the designs which she had been unable to carry out. Does not Aristotle's distinction, then, between the two forms of art disappear? To the question thus raised Aristotle offers no direct answer ; nor perhaps did he put it to himself in this form. But if we follow out his thought, his reply would appear to be something of this kind. Nature is a living and creative energy, which by a sort of instinctive reason works in every individual object towards a specific end. In some domains the end is more clearly visible than in others ; the higher we carry our observation in the scale of existence the more certainly can the end be discerned. Everywhere, however, there is a ceaseless and upward progress,

an unfolding of new life in inexhaustible variety. Each individual thing has an ideal form towards which it tends, and in the realisation of this form, which is one with the essence (*οὐσία*) of the object, its end is attained. Nature is an artist capable indeed of mistakes, but who by slow advances and through many failures realises her own idea.<sup>1</sup> Her organising and plastic power displays itself in the manifest purpose which governs her movements. Some of the humbler members of her kingdom may appear mean if taken singly and judged by the impression they make upon the senses. Their true beauty and significance are visible to the eye of reason, which looks not to the material elements or to the isolated parts but to the structure of the whole.<sup>2</sup> In her struc-

<sup>1</sup> *Phys.* ii. 8. 199 a 17 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Aristot. *de Part. Anim.* i. 5. 645 a 4 sqq., "Having already treated of the celestial world, as far as our conjectures could reach, we proceed to treat of animals, without omitting, to the best of our ability, any member of the kingdom, however ignoble. For if some have no graces to charm the sense (*πρὸς τὴν αἴσθησιν*), yet even these, by disclosing to intellectual perception the artistic spirit that designed them, give immense pleasure to all who can trace links of causation and are inclined to philosophy (*κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν ὅμως ἢ δημιουργήσασα φύσις ἀμηχάνους ἡδονὰς παρέχει τοῖς δυναμένοις τὰς αἰτίας γνωρίζειν καὶ φύσει φιλοσόφοις*). Indeed it would be strange if mimic representations of them were attractive because they disclose the constructive skill of the painter or sculptor, and the original

tural faculty lies nature's perfection. With her the attainment of the end "holds the place of the beautiful." <sup>1</sup>

Now, art in its widest sense starts from a mental conception of the ideal as thus determined.<sup>2</sup> Useful art, employing nature's own machinery, aids her in her effort to realise the ideal in the world around us, so far as man's practical needs are served by furthering this purpose. Fine art sets practical needs aside; it does not seek to affect the real world, to modify the actual. By mere imagery it reveals the ideal form at which nature aims in the highest sphere of organic realities themselves were not more interesting, to all at any rate that have eyes to discern the reason that presided over their formation" (Ogle's Transl.)

The thought of the shaping and plastic power of nature is in one form or another a persistent one in Greek philosophy and literature. In Plato (*Soph.* 265 B *sqq.*) God is the divine artist; in the Stoics nature, "artifex," "artificiosa," fashions by instinct works which human skill cannot equal (Cic. *de Nat. D.* ii. 22); with them the universe is the divine poem. In Plotinus God is artist and poet. In Dion Chrysostom (*Ὀλυμπ. Or.* xii. 416 R) Ζεὺς is πρῶτος καὶ τελειότατος δημιουργός; in Philostratus ζωγράφος ὁ Θεός.

<sup>1</sup> *De Part. Anim.* i. 5. 645 a 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Met.* vi. 7. 1032 a 32, ἀπὸ τέχνης δὲ γίγνεται ὅσων τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ. *De Part. Anim.* i. 1. 640 a 31, ἡ δὲ τέχνη λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ὁ ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης. The mental conception of the εἶδος in a concrete form is called νόησις, the impressing of this conception on the matter is called ποίησις; *Met.* vi. 7. 1032 b 15. This whole theory of art is summed up in the words ἡ γὰρ τέχνη τὸ εἶδος (*Met.* vi. 9. 1034 a 24).

existence,—in the region, namely, of human life, where her intention is most manifest, though her failures too are most numerous. Resembling nature in a certain instinctive yet rational faculty, it does not follow the halting course of nature's progress; it ignores the intervening steps, the slow processes, by which nature attempts to bridge the space between the potential and the actual. The form, which nature has been striving, and perhaps vainly striving, to attain stands forth embodied in a creation of the mind. The ideal has taken concrete shape, the finished product stands before us, nor do we ask how it has come to be what it is. The flaws and failures incident to the natural process are removed, and in a glorified appearance we discern nature's ideal intention. Fine art, then, is a completion of nature in a sense not applicable to useful art; it presents to us only an image, but a purified image of nature's original.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In some domains nature carries out her artistic intentions in a manner that surpasses all the efforts of art; and in one place Aristotle actually says, *μᾶλλον δ' ἐστὶ τὸ οὐ ἐνεκα καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἐν τοῖς τῆς φύσεως ἔργοις ἢ ἐν τοῖς τῆς τέχνης* (*de Part. Anim.* i. i. 639 b 19). This however requires to be taken with proper qualification. The general attitude which Aristotle adopts is not materially different from that adopted by Goethe in the words: "Nature in many of her works reveals a charm of beauty which no human art can hope to reach; but I am by no means of opinion that she is beautiful in all

. Here again we note the different positions which Plato and Aristotle severally held in relation to fine art. Plato starting from the notion of pure Being found reality only in the world of ideas, sensible phenomena being but so many images which at best remind us of the celestial archetype. To him Becoming was the simple antithesis of Being; it meant the world of change, the sphere of phenomena, the region in which the individual life appears for a moment and then vanishes away. The poet or painter holds up a mirror to material objects,—earth, plants, animals, mankind,—and catches a reflection of the world around him, which is itself only the reflection of the ideal.<sup>1</sup> The actual world therefore stands nearer to the idea than the artistic imitation, and fine art is a copy of a copy, three times removed from truth.<sup>2</sup> It is conversant with the outward shows and semblances of things, and produces its effects by illusions of form and colour, which dupe the senses. The imitative artist does not need more than a surface acquaintance with the thing he represents. He is on a level below

her aspects. Her intentions are indeed always good, but not so the conditions which are required to make her manifest herself completely.”

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* x. 596 E.

<sup>2</sup> *Rep.* x. 597 E.

the skilled craftsman whose art is intelligent and based on rational principles, and who alone has a title to be called a "maker" or creator. A painter may paint a table very admirably without knowing anything of the inner construction of a table, a knowledge which the carpenter, who would fashion it for its proper end, must possess. And poets, too, whose ideas of men are formed on a limited experience,<sup>1</sup> cannot pass beyond the range of that experience, they have no insight into the nature of man, into the human soul as it is in itself; this can be attained only by philosophic study.

The fundamental thought of Aristotle's philosophy, on the other hand, is Becoming not Being; and Becoming to him meant not an appearing and a vanishing away, but a process of development, an unfolding of what is already in the germ, an upward ascent ending in Being which is the highest object of knowledge. The concrete individual thing is not a shadowy appearance but the primary reality. The outward and material world, the diverse manifestations of nature's life, organic and inorganic, the processes of birth and decay, the manifold forms of sensuous beauty, all gained a new importance for his philosophy. Physical

<sup>1</sup> *Timaeus*, 19 D.



science, slighted by Plato, was passionately studied by Aristotle. Fine art was no longer three times removed from the truth of things; it was the manifestation of a higher truth, the expression of the universal which is not outside of and apart from the particular but pre-supposed in each particular. The work of art was not a semblance opposed to reality, but the image of a reality which is penetrated by the idea, and through which the idea shows more transparent than in the actual world. Whereas Plato had laid it down that "the greatest and fairest things are done by nature, and the lesser by art, which receives from nature all the greater and primeval creations and fashions them in detail,"<sup>1</sup> Aristotle saw in fine art a rational faculty which divines nature's unfulfilled intentions, and reveals her ideal to sense. The illusions which fine art employs do not cheat the mind; they image forth the immanent idea which cannot find adequate expression under the forms of material existence.

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* x. 889 A. Jowett's Trans.

IV. POETRY AS AN IMITATION OR EXPRESSION  
OF "THE UNIVERSAL"

WHAT is true of fine art in general is explicitly asserted by Aristotle of poetry alone, to which in a unique manner it applies. Poetry expresses most adequately the universal element in human nature and in life. As a revelation of the universal it abstracts from human life much that is accidental. It liberates us from the tyranny of physical surroundings. It can disregard material needs and animal longings. Thought disengages itself from sense and makes itself supreme over things outward. "It is the poet's function," says Aristotle, "to relate not what has happened but what may happen, and what is possible according to the law of probable or necessary sequence. The historian and the poet differ not in writing with or without metre—for we might put Herodotus into verse, and it would be a history as much in verse as in prose—but in this,—that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen."<sup>1</sup> The first distinguishing mark, then, of poetry is that it has a higher subject-matter than history ;

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 1-2. 1451 a 37 sqq.

it expresses the universal (τὰ καθόλου) not the particular (τὰ καθ' ἑκάστων), the permanent possibilities of human nature (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο); it does not merely tell the story of the individual life, "what Alcibiades did or suffered."<sup>1</sup>

Though we may be inclined to take exception to the criticism which appears to limit history to dry chronicles, and to overlook the existence of a history such as that of Thucydides, yet the main thought here cannot be disputed. History is based upon facts, and with these it is primarily concerned; poetry transforms its facts into truths. The history of Herodotus, in spite of the epic grandeur of the theme and a unity of design, which though obscured is not effaced by the numerous digressions, would still, as Aristotle says, be history and not poetry even if it were put into verse. Next, poetry exhibits a more rigorous connection of events; cause and event are linked together in "probable or necessary sequence" (κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον). Histories of the usual type (αἱ συνήθεις ἱστορίαι), as Aristotle observes in a later chapter, are a record of actual facts, of particular events, strung together in the order of time but without causal connection.<sup>2</sup> Not only in the development

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 4. 1451 b 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 23. 1-2. 1459 a 21 sqq.

of the plot<sup>1</sup> but also in the internal evolution of character,<sup>2</sup> the drama observes a stricter and more logical order than that of actual experience. The rule of probability which Aristotle enjoins is not the narrow "vraisemblance" which it was understood to mean by many of the older French critics, which would shut the poet out from the higher regions of the imagination and confine him to the trivial round of immediate reality. The incidents of every tragedy worthy of the name are improbable if measured by the likelihood of their everyday occurrence,—improbable in the same degree in which characters capable of great deeds and great passions are rare. The rule of "probability," as also that of "necessity," refers rather to the internal structure of a poem; it is the inner law which secures the cohesion of the parts. The "probable" in Aristotle is not determined by a numerical average of instances; it denotes the natural order and course of things, the rule not the exception,<sup>3</sup>—though the apparent exception may by artistic treatment be brought under the rule.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 1. 1451 a 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 15. 6. 1454 a 33.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. *Analyt. Prior.* ii. 27. 70 a 4 *sqq.* where the *εἰκός* and the *ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν* are identified.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. *Poet.* 18. 6. 1456 a 24, *εἰκός γὰρ γίνεσθαι πολλὰ καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκός.*

The "probable" excludes mere chance, though in a popular sense nothing is more probable than the occurrence of what is called accident. Chance dominates or seems to dominate throughout great spaces of nature; but chance as such has no place in poetry,—not, at least, in its more serious forms. Into the domain of apparent accident art introduces manifest purpose. Hence the world of the possible which poetry creates is more intelligible than the world of experience. The poet presents permanent and eternal facts, free from the elements of unreason which disturb our comprehension of real events and of human conduct. In fashioning his material he may transcend nature but he may not contradict her; he must not be disobedient to her habits and principles. He may recreate the actual but he must avoid the lawless, the fantastic, the impossible. Poetic truth passes the bounds of reality, yet it observes the laws which make the real world rational.

Thus poetry in virtue of its higher subject-matter and of the closer and more organic union of its parts acquires an ideal unity that history never possesses. The prose of life is never wholly eliminated from a record of actual facts. It is noticeable that the opposition between the poet

and the historian in the *Poetics* is incidentally introduced to illustrate the meaning of unity in a poem.<sup>1</sup> This idea receives detailed treatment only in its application to the drama and the epic. The plot in each case must be one and a whole.<sup>2</sup> Now these two notions as understood by Aristotle are not identical. A unity is composed of a plurality of parts which are held together and fall under a common idea, but are not necessarily combined in a definite order. The notion of a whole implies something more. The parts which constitute it must be inwardly connected, arranged in a certain order, structurally related, and combined into a system. A whole is not a mere mass or sum of external parts which may be transposed at will, any one of which may be omitted without perceptibly affecting the rest.<sup>3</sup> It is a unity which is unfolded and expanded according to the law of its own nature, an organism which develops from within. By the rule, again, of beauty, which

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. I. 1451 a 36, φανερόν δὲ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων κ.τ.λ.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* ch. 7 and 8 for the drama, and ch. 23 for the epic.

<sup>3</sup> *Met.* iv. 26 p. 1024 a 1, ὅσων μὲν μὴ ποιεῖ ἡ θέσις διαφορὰν, πᾶν λέγεται, ὅσων δὲ ποιεῖ, ὅλον. *Ibid.* p. 1023 b 26, ὅλον λέγεται οὐ τε μηδὲν ἄπεστι μέρος ἐξ ὧν λέγεται ὅλον φύσει κ.τ.λ. Cp. *Poet.* 8. 4. 1451 a 34, ὃ γὰρ προσὸν ἢ μὴ προσὸν μηδὲν ποιεῖ ἐπίδηλον, οὐδὲν μόριον τοῦ ὅλου ἐστίν.

is a first requirement of art, a poetic creation must exhibit at once unity and plurality. If it is too small the whole is perceived but not the parts; if too large the parts are perceived but not the whole.<sup>1</sup> The idea of an organism evidently underlies all Aristotle's rules about unity; it is tacitly assumed as a first principle of art, and in one passage is expressly mentioned as that from which the rule of epic unity is deduced. "The plot must as in a tragedy be dramatically constructed; it must have for its object a single action whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, *that like a single living organism* it may produce its appropriate pleasure."<sup>2</sup> Plato in the *Phaedrus* had insisted that every artistic composition, whether in prose or verse, should have an organic unity. "You will allow that every discourse ought to be constructed like a living organism, having its own body and head and feet; it must have middle and extremities, which are framed in a manner agreeable to one another and to the whole."<sup>3</sup> Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 7. 4-5. 1450 b 35 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 23. 1. 1459 a 17, δεῖ τοὺς μύθους καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικούς καὶ περὶ μίαν πράξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσιν ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ὥς περ ζῶον ἐν ὅλῳ ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedr.* 264 C, ἀλλὰ τόδε γε οἶμαι σε φάναι εἶναι, δεῖν πάντα

took up the hint ; the passage above quoted from the *Poetics* is a remarkable echo of the words of the *Phaedrus* ; and indeed the idea may be said to be at the basis of his whole poetic criticism.

A work then of poetic art, as he conceives it, while it manifests the universal is yet a concrete and individual reality, a coherent whole, animated by a living principle,—or by something which is at least the counterpart of life,—and framed according to the laws of organic beauty. The artistic product is not indeed in a literal sense alive ; for life or soul is in Aristotle the result of the proper form being impressed upon the proper matter.<sup>1</sup> Now, in art the matter depends on the choice of the artist ; it has no necessary relation to the form which is impressed on it. That form it passively receives, but it is not thereby endowed with any active principle of life or movement. The form

λόγον ὥσπερ ζῶον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ, ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντ' ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα. Cp. *Polit.* 277 C, where the discussion is compared to the sketch of a ζῶον in a painting : ἀλλ' ἀτεχνῶς ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ζῶον τὴν ἐξωθεν μὲν περιγραφὴν ἔοικεν ἱκανῶς ἔχειν, τὴν δὲ ὅλον τοῖς φαρμάκοις καὶ τῇ συγκράσει τῶν χρωμάτων ἐνάργειαν οὐκ ἀπειληφέναι πω.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *de Part. Anim.* i. 1. 640 b 32 sqq. A dead body has the same outward configuration as a living one, yet it is not a man ; so too a hand of brass or of wood is a hand only in name.



or essence lives truly only in the mind of the artist who conceived the work, and it is in thought alone that it is transferred to the dead matter with which it has no natural affinity. The artist, or the spectator who has entered into the artist's thought, by a mental act lends life to the artistic creation; he speaks, he thinks of it as a thing of life; but it has no inherent principle of movement; it is in truth not alive but merely the semblance of a living reality.

Returning now to the discussion about poetry and history we shall better understand Aristotle's general conclusion, which is contained in the words so well known and so often misunderstood: "Poetry is more philosophic and of higher worth than history,"<sup>1</sup> where *σπουδαιότερον* denotes "higher in the scale;"<sup>2</sup>—not "more serious," for the words apply even to comedy, nor, again, "more moral," which is quite alien to the context;—and the reason of the higher worth of poetry is that it approaches nearer to the universal, which itself derives its value from being a "manifestation of

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 3. 1451 b 5, διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν, ἥ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἥ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει.

<sup>2</sup> Teichmüller, *Aristot. Forsch.* ii. 178, who illustrates this sense of *σπουδαῖος* from *Eth. Nic.* vi. 7. 1141 a 21.

the cause" <sup>1</sup> or first principle of things. Poetry in striving to give universal form to its own creations reveals a higher truth than history, and on that account is nearer to philosophy. But though it has a philosophic character it is not philosophy, "It *tends* to express the universal." The *μᾶλλον* is here a limiting and saving expression; it marks the endeavour and direction of poetry, which cannot however entirely coincide with philosophy. The capacity of poetry is so far limited that it expresses the universal not as it is in itself, but as seen through the medium of sensuous imagery.

Plato, while condemning the poetry of his own country, had gone far towards merging an ideal poetry in philosophy. The artist who is no mere imitator, whose work is a revelation to sense of eternal ideas, being possessed by an imaginative enthusiasm which is akin to the speculative enthusiasm of the philosopher, from the things of sense ascends to that higher region where truth and beauty are one. Aristotle's phrase in this passage of the *Poetics* might, in like manner, appear almost to identify poetry with philosophy. But if we read his meaning in the light of what he says

<sup>1</sup> *Analyt. Post.* I. 31. 88 a 4, τὸ δὲ καθόλου τίμιον ὅτι δηλοῖ τὸ αἴτιον.

elsewhere and of the general system of his thought, we see that he does not confound the two spheres though they touch at a single point. Philosophy seeks to discover the universal in the particular, its end is to know and to possess the truth, and in that possession it reposes. The aim of poetry is to represent the universal through the particular, to give a concrete and living embodiment of a universal truth. The universal of poetry is not an abstract idea; it is particularised to sense, it comes before the mind clothed in the form of the concrete, presented under the appearance of a living organism whose parts are in vital and structural relation to the whole.

It is the more necessary to insist on this because the analytic criticism of Aristotle may easily lead to a misconception of his meaning. In applying the method of logical abstraction to the organic parts of a poetic whole he may appear to forget that he is dealing not with a product of abstract thought but with a concrete work of art. The impression may be confirmed by a hasty reading of *Poet.* ch. 17. 3-4 where the poet is advised first to set forth his plot in its general idea (*ἐκτίθεσθαι καθόλου*), abstracting the accidental features of time, place, and persons, and afterwards

to fill it in with detail and incident and with proper names. The meaning, however, is not that the poet must assume a general idea and then by conscious reflection make it particular. He starts according to Aristotle from a particular story, from one of the traditional legends, the instance here selected being the legend of Iphigenia. He disentangles the main outline, adding or omitting as artistic purposes may require. The method of poetry as set forth in the following lines of Coleridge is not unlike what Aristotle recommends in this chapter:—

“ Thus doth she, when from individual states  
She doth abstract the universal kinds,  
Which then reclothed in divers names and fates  
Steal access thro’ our senses to our minds.”

Such a method, though it may not conform exactly to the practice of the greater poets, does not imply that a general idea shall be embodied in a particular example—that is the method of allegory rather than that of poetry—but that the particular case shall be generalised by artistic treatment. “The young poet,” says Goethe, “must do some sort of violence to himself to get out of the mere general idea. No doubt this is difficult; but it is the very life of art.” “A

special case requires nothing but the treatment of a poet to become universal and poetical." With this Aristotle would have agreed. Goethe, who tells us that with him "every idea rapidly changed itself into an image," was asked what idea he meant to embody in his *Faust*. "As if I knew myself and could inform them. From heaven, through the world, to hell, would indeed be something; but this is no idea, only a course of action. . . . It was, in short, not in my line, as a poet, to strive to embody anything abstract. I received in my mind impressions and those of a sensuous, animated, charming, varied, hundredfold kind, just as a lively imagination presented them; and I had, as a poet, nothing more to do than artistically to round them off and elaborate such views and impressions, and by means of a lively representation so to bring them forward that others might receive the same impression in hearing or reading my representation of them."<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, again, in giving in his adhesion to Aristotle's theory thinks it necessary to guard against the misconstruction to which, as we have seen, that doctrine is exposed. "I adopt," he says, "with

<sup>1</sup> Eckermann's *Conversations of Goethe*, Transl. (Bohn's series), p. 258.

full faith the theory of Aristotle that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident ; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation, must be representative of a class ; and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the common attributes of the class ; not such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable that he would possess." And he adds in a note, "Say not that I am recommending abstractions, for these class characteristics which constitute the instructiveness of a character are so modified and particularised in each person of the Shakespearian Drama, that life itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of individuality which belongs to real existence. Paradoxical as it may sound, one of the essential properties of geometry is not less essential to dramatic excellence ; and Aristotle has accordingly required of the poet an involution of the universal in the individual. The chief differences are, that in geometry it is the universal truth, which is uppermost in the consciousness ; in poetry the individual form, in which the truth is clothed." <sup>1</sup> It is the same thought

<sup>1</sup> *Biog. Lit.* ii. 41.

which runs through Aristotle, Goethe and Coleridge,—that the poet while he seems to be concerned only with the particular, is in truth concerned with *quod semper quod ubique*. He seizes and reproduces a concrete fact, but transfigures it so that the higher truth, the idea of the universal, shines through it.

#### V. THE DIFFERENT MANNER IN WHICH TRAGEDY AND COMEDY UNIVERSALISE CHARACTER

POETRY then, we say, following Aristotle, is an expression of the universal element in human life, or, in equivalent modern phrase, it idealises life. Now the word “idealise” has two senses, which may give rise to confusion. Writers on aesthetics generally mean by it the representation of an object in its permanent and essential aspects, in a form that answers to its true idea; disengaged from the passing accidents that cling to individuality and from disturbing influences that obscure the type. What is local or transient is either omitted or reduced to subordinate rank; the particular is enlarged till it broadens out into the

human and the universal. In this sense "the ideal" is "the universal" of Aristotle's *Poetics*. But there is another and more popular use of the term according to which an idealised representation implies not only an absence of disturbing influences in the manifestation of the idea, but a positive accession of what is beautiful. The object is seized in some happy and characteristic moment, its lines of grace or strength are more firmly drawn, its beauty is heightened, the object is ennobled while the likeness to the original is yet retained. The two senses of the word coincide in the higher regions of art. When the subject-matter of artistic representation already possesses a grandeur or beauty of its own, in proportion as accidents are suppressed the original and dominant characteristics will be heightened, and the ideal form that results will have added elements of beauty. The leading characters in tragedy while true to human nature stand out above the common man in stature and dignity, just as portrait painters while preserving the likeness ennoble the subject of their art.<sup>1</sup> In the very act of eliminating the accidental a higher beauty and

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 15. 8. 1454 b 10, ἀποδιδόντες τὴν ἰδίαν μορφήν, ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες, καλλίους γράφουσιν.



perfection are discovered than was manifested in the world of reality. Tragedy, in short, in the persons of its heroes combines both kinds of idealisation; it universalises, and in so doing it embellishes.

Idealised portraiture does not, as is sometimes thought, consist in the presentation of characters of flawless virtue. Aristotle's tragic hero as delineated in *Poetics* ch. 13 is by no means free from faults and failings. The instance, again, of Achilles as a poetic type of character, who in spite of defects has a moral nobility entitling him to rank as ideal, shows that the idealising process as understood by Aristotle does not imply the omission of all defects.<sup>1</sup> In general it may be said that some particular quality or group of qualities must be thrown into relief; some commanding faculty heightened, provided that in so doing the equipoise of character, which constitutes a typical human being, is not disturbed. The ideal is that which is raised above the trivial and accidental; by virtue of a universal element which answers to the true idea of the object it transcends the limitations of the individual. Even vicious characters are not excluded on Aristotle's theory from a place

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 15. 8. 1454 b 15.

in tragedy, if only they are typical in their kind, though certain remarks if pressed in the letter would lead to their exclusion. It is merely the foremost place which is denied to the villain; and here Aristotle, if too rigid in his rule, is at least in accordance with the practice of the Greek tragedians, who bring in wickedness as a foil to goodness, and by contrasted lights and shades produce a total impression of harmonious beauty. The saying attributed to Sophocles,<sup>1</sup> αὐτὸς μὲν οἷους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοι εἶσι, does not bear the interpretation often assigned to it, that the characters of Sophocles are patterns of perfect goodness while those of Euripides are the men and women of real life. Literally translated the words are; "Sophocles represented men as they *ought to be represented* (οἷους δεῖ, sc. ποιεῖν), while Euripides represents them as they are." That is, the characters of Sophocles answer to the higher dramatic requirements; they are typical of universal human nature in its deeper and abiding aspects; whereas Euripides reproduced personal idiosyncrasies and the trivial features of everyday reality.

Objection may be taken to the distinction

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 25. 6. 1460 b 34.

drawn between the two meanings of the word "idealise," on the ground that they run into one another and fundamentally mean the same thing. It may be urged that so far as an object assumes its universal form, ridding itself of non-essentials, it will stand out in perfect beauty ; for all ugliness, all imperfection, all evil itself, is an accident of nature, a derangement and disturbance by which things fall short of their true idea. To represent the universal would thus in its ultimate analysis imply the representation of the object in the noblest and fairest forms in which it can clothe itself according to artistic laws. Comedy, which concerns itself with the weaknesses and follies, the flaws and imperfections of mankind, cannot on this reasoning idealise or universalise its object. Now, it may or may not be that evil or imperfection can be shown to be a necessary and ultimate element in the universe ; but the point seems to be one for philosophy to discuss, not for art to assume. Art, when it seeks to give a comprehensive picture of human life, must accept such flaws as belong to the normal constitution of man and to the conditions of reality. At what precise point imperfections are to be regarded as accidental, abnormal, irregular ; as presenting so

marked a deviation from the type as to be unworthy of lasting embodiment in art is a problem whose answer will vary at different stages of history, and will admit of different applications according to the particular art that is in question. Certain imperfections, however, will probably always be looked on as permanent features of our common humanity. With these defects comedy amuses itself, discovering the inconsistencies which underlie life and character, and exhibiting evil not as it is in its essential nature, but evil viewed as ugliness, or incongruity, and manifested in weakness or folly, a thing not to be hated, but laughed at. Thus limiting its range of vision comedy is able to give artistic expression to certain types of character, which can hardly find a place in serious art. It can idealise, not indeed in such a way as to beautify the ugly, but so as to express the particular under the form of the universal.

Aristotle draws no distinction between the universality which properly belongs to tragedy and comedy respectively. Each of these, as a branch of the poetic art, embodies the type rather than the individual, and to this extent they have a common function.

. As a salient illustration of what is meant by poetic generalisation, Aristotle selects comedy.<sup>1</sup> He points to the comedy of his own day as clearly showing the tendency to discard the use of historical names, and to adopt names which suggest characteristic qualities. It was part of the effort, which, as he says, poetry makes to express the universal.<sup>2</sup> The name had only to be heard in order that the type to which the person belonged might be recognised ; much in the same way as in the New Comedy the Boor, the Parasite, and other types were known on the stage by their familiar masks. It may be added that not the names only of the characters but the extant titles of plays composed by writers

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 4-5. 1451 b 9 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> *I.c.* There may seem at first sight to be some inconsistency between οὐ στοχάζεται ἡ πόλις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθεμένη and τὰ τυχόντα ὀνόματα ὑποτιθέσιν : it might look as if Aristotle after asserting that typical or expressive names are employed in poetry went on to say that the names are given at haphazard. But the passage is perfectly consistent. The sentence συστήσαντες γὰρ τὸν μῦθον . . . οὕτω κ.τ.λ. means, "the comic poets first compose the plot according to the rules of probability, and then (οὕτω) assume such names as they please." The plot being constructed, names (expressive names, as the context shows) are adapted to it ; the names depend upon the author's choice. This is quite another thing from names being given simply at random. Lessing who corrected previous misunderstandings of this passage failed himself to observe the idiomatic use of οὕτω (*Hamburg Notes*, No. 89-90. Transl. Bohn, pp. 459-461). †

of the Middle Comedy imply the same effort after generalisation. They remind us of the character sketches of Theophrastus. Such are "the Peevish man" (ὁ Δύσκολος), "the Faultfinder" (ὁ Μεμψίμοιρος), "the Busybody" (ὁ Πολυπράγμων), "the Hermit" (ὁ Μονότροπος). Other pieces again bear the name of a profession, as "the Boxer" (ὁ Πύκτης), "the Charioteer" (ὁ Ἡνίοχος), "the Soldier" (ὁ Στρατιώτης); and others are called after a people, "the Thessalians," "the Thebans," "the Corinthians," and doubtless portray or satirise national characteristics. In various places Aristotle indicates the distinction between comedy proper, which playfully touches the faults and foibles of humanity, and personal satire (ἡ ἰαμβικὴ ἰδέα)<sup>1</sup> and invective (λοιδορία). The one kind of composition is a representation of the universal, the other of the particular; the one is identified by Aristotle with the comedy of his own day, the other is intended to include the old political comedy of Athens. He does not expressly mention Aristophanes, but by implication he reckons him among "lampooners" (οἱ ἰαμβοποιοί),<sup>2</sup> and among those who employed coarse or abusive language (αἰσχρολογία), instead of delicate inuendo

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 5. 3. 1449 b 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 9. 5. 1451 b 14.

(ὑπόνοια).<sup>1</sup> He shows a marked preference for the Middle Comedy as presenting generalised types of character in conformity with the fundamental laws of poetry.

It is doubtful whether Aristotle had any perception of the genius and imaginative power of Aristophanes. The characters of the Aristophanic drama are not fairly judged if they are thought of simply as historical individuals, who are subjected to a merciless caricature. Socrates, Cleon, Euripides are types which represent certain movements in philosophy, politics, and poetry. They are labelled with historic names; a few obvious traits are borrowed which recall the well-known personalities; but the dramatic personages are in no sense the men who are known to us from history. Such poetic truth as they possess is derived simply from their typical quality. It is not indeed in the manner of Aristophanes to attempt any faithful portraiture of life or character. His imagination works by giving embodiment to what is abstract. His love of bold personification is in part inherited from his predecessors on the Attic stage: Cratinus had introduced Laws (Νόμοι) and Riches (Πλούτοι) as his choruses. But Aristophanes goes further;

<sup>1</sup> *Eth. Nic.* iv. 14. 1128 a 22-4.

he seems to think through materialised ideas. He personifies the Just and the Unjust Logic, and brings them before us as lawcourt disputants; he incarnates a metaphor such as the philosopher in the clouds, the jurymen with waspish temper, mankind with their airy hopes. The same bent of mind leads him to give a concrete form to the forces and tendencies of the age, and to embody them in actual persons. A play of Aristophanes is a dramatised debate, an *ἀγών*, in which the persons represent opposing principles; for in form the piece is always combative, though the fight may be but a mock fight. These principles are brought into collision and worked out to their most irrational conclusions, little regard being paid to the coherence of the parts and still less to propriety of character. The Aristophanic comedy, having transported real persons into a world where the conditions of reality are neglected, strips them of all that is truly individual and distinctive, it invests them with the attributes of a class or makes them representative of an idea.

In the Middle Comedy and still more in the New Comedy we observe a change in the manner of poetic generalisation. We quit the fantastic world of Aristophanes with its audacious allegories



and grotesque types of character. There is now a closer study of real life and a finer delineation of motive. The action by degrees gains strength and consistency, till like that of tragedy, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Character and action become more intimately united. The typical follies and failings of mankind are woven into a plot, in which moral probability takes the place of the arbitrary sequence of loosely connected scenes and incidents. The broad characteristics of humanity receive a more faithful, if a more prosaic rendering. In Aristotle's day the movement here described was but partially developed. He did not live to see the masterpieces of Menander, which were the poetic embodiment of his own theory. The Middle Comedy which suggested to him his ideal had not indeed altogether dropped the element of personal satire; it merely replaced the invective formerly levelled against public men by a gentle raillery of poets and philosophers. Still Aristotle discerned accurately the direction in which comedy was travelling, and not improbably contributed by his reasoned principles and precepts to carry forward the literary movement already initiated.

We have seen that in the *Poetics* (ch. 9.) he

draws no distinction between the generalisation proper to tragedy and that which is proper to comedy. It is an important omission, though in a treatise so fragmentary as the *Poetics*, in which most of the very section devoted to comedy is wanting, we are hardly warranted in assuming that he saw no difference in this respect between the two forms of poetry. Yet critics give ingenious reasons for what they conceive to be the orthodox Aristotelian view. Lessing, to whom Aristotle's authority was that of a lawgiver in art, and who admits that he considers the *Poetics* "as infallible as the *Elements of Euclid*," having once satisfied himself that Aristotle had pronounced upon the matter in dispute, enforces at length the conclusion that the characters in comedy are general precisely in the same sense as those of tragedy.<sup>1</sup> He controverts the saying of Diderot that "Comedy has species, tragedy has individuals," and the similar observation of Hurd that "Comedy makes all characters general, tragedy particular."<sup>2</sup> But, surely, there is a real distinction between the generalisation of tragedy and of comedy, though it is not exactly expressed in the sayings above

<sup>1</sup> Lessing, *Dramatic Notes* No. 89-92.

<sup>2</sup> *Dramatic Notes* No. 92.

quoted. Comedy looking at a single aspect of life, at the follies, the imperfections, the inconsistencies of men, so far as they provoke a sympathetic mirth, and detaching itself from the graver issues which concern the end of conduct, cannot like tragedy, whose range is not thus limited, present a rounded and complete action, an image of universal human nature. The usual method of comedy is to embody a dominant characteristic or a leading passion, so that the single attribute becomes the man. A character so created, exhibiting an ideal of covetousness, misanthropy, or whatever the quality may be, almost of necessity runs to caricature. It is framed on lines of impossible simplicity. The single quality, which in nature is organically related to other impulses and powers, is isolated and exaggerated. The process is one of abstraction, and corresponds to an original one-sidedness in the comic view of life. Not that comedy in its generalising effort suppresses particulars. It accentuates just those accidents which tragedy ignores ; no detail is too trivial for it, no utterance too momentary, no desires too purely egotistic. In the passing and unreal appearances of life it finds everywhere material for mirth. In a sense it individualises

everything, no less truly than in another sense it generalises all. What it cannot achieve as a purely sportive activity is to combine these two aspects in ethical portraiture. Seldom indeed has comedy created a character that is not merely a type but a living personality; Greek comedy never,—at least in the extant plays. In modern literature we have a Falstaff, a Don Quixote, and how few besides! Even Molière portrays abstract qualities rather than living men. On the other hand Greek tragedy, like all tragedy of the highest order, has this distinguishing mark, that it combines in one harmonious representation the individual and the universal. Whereas comedy tends to merge the individual in the type, tragedy manifests the type through the individual. In a word, pure comedy creates personified ideals, tragedy creates idealised persons.

## VI. TWO VIEWS OF THE OFFICE OF POETRY IN GREECE

THE question as to the proper end of fine art was generally discussed in Greece in its special application to poetry. Two views were currently held.

The traditional one, which had gained wide acceptance, was that poetry has a direct moral purpose ; the primary function of a poet is that of a teacher. Even after professional teachers of the art of conduct had appeared in Greece the poets were not deposed from the educational office which time had consecrated. Homer was still thought of less as the inspired poet who charmed the imagination than as the great teacher who had laid down all the rules needed for the conduct of life, and in whom were hidden all the lessons of philosophy. The other theory, tacitly no doubt held by many, but put into definite shape first by Aristotle, was that poetry is an emotional delight, its end is to give pleasure. Strabo (*circ.* 24 B.C.) alludes to the two conflicting opinions. Eratosthenes, he says, maintained that "the aim of the poet always is to please not to instruct."<sup>1</sup> He himself holds with the ancients "that poetry is a kind of rudimentary philosophy, which introduces us early to life, and gives us pleasurable instruction in reference to character, emotion, action."<sup>2</sup> The Greek states, he

<sup>1</sup> Strabo i. 2. 3, ποιητὴν γὰρ ἔφη πάντα στοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας οὐ διδασκαλίας.

<sup>2</sup> *I. c.* τοῦναντίον δ' οἱ παλαιοὶ φιλοσοφίαν τινὰ λέγουσι πρῶτην τὴν ποιητικὴν εἰσάγουσαν εἰς τὸν βίον ἡμῶς ἐκ νέων καὶ διδάσκουσαν ἥθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις μεθ' ἡδονῆς.

argues, prescribed poetry as the first lesson of childhood ; they did so, surely, not merely in order to please, but to afford correction in morals.<sup>1</sup> In carrying the same discipline into mature years they expressed their conviction that poetry as a regulative influence on morals was adapted to every period of life. In course of time, he observes, philosophical and historical studies had been introduced, but these addressed themselves only to the few, while the appeal of poetry was to the masses.<sup>2</sup> Eratosthenes ought to have modified his phrase and said that the poet writes partly to please and partly to instruct, instead of which he converted poetry into a privileged *raconteuse* of old wives' fables, with no other object in view than to charm the mind.<sup>3</sup> If, however, poetry is the art which imitates life by the medium of speech, how can one be a poet who is senseless and ignorant of life ? The excellence of a poet is not like that of a carpenter or a smith ; it is bound up with that of the human being. No one can be a good poet who is not first a good man.<sup>4</sup>

This remarkable passage accurately reflects the

<sup>1</sup> Strabo i. 2. 3, οὐ ψυχαγωγίας χάριν δῆπουθεν ψιλῆς ἀλλὰ σωφρονισμοῦ.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 2. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* i. 2. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 2. 5, ἡ δὲ ποιητοῦ [ἀρετὴ] συνέξενκται τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ οὐχ οἷον τε ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν μὴ πρότερον γενηθέντα ἀνδρα ἀγαθόν.

sentiment which persisted to a late time in Greece, long after the strictly teaching functions of poetry had passed into other hands. It is to be met with everywhere in Plutarch. "Poetry is the preparatory school of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> "It opens and awakens the youthful mind to the doctrines of philosophy."<sup>2</sup> When first the young hear these doctrines they are bewildered and reject them. "Before they pass from darkness into full sunshine they must dwell in a reflected light beneath the soft rays of a truth that is blended with fiction, and so be habituated painlessly to face the blaze of philosophy without flinching."<sup>3</sup> The novice requires wise guidance "in order that through a schooling that brings no estrangement he may, as a kindly and familiar friend, be conducted by poetry into the presence of philosophy."<sup>4</sup>

How deeply the Greek mind was impressed with the moral office of the poet, is shown by the

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *de Aud. Poet.* ch. I, ἐν ποιήμασι προφιλοσοφητέον.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ch. I4, ἔτι δὲ προανόγει καὶ προκινεῖ τὴν τοῦ νέου ψυχὴν τοῖς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγοις.

<sup>3</sup> *I.c.* οὐδὲ ὑπομένοντας ἂν μὴ οἶον ἐκ σκότους πολλοῦ μέλλοντες ἥλιον ὁρᾶν ἐθισθῶσι, καθάπερ ἐν νόθῳ φωτὶ καὶ κεκραμένης μύθοις ἀληθείας αὐγὴν ἔχοντι μαλθακὴν, ἀλύπως διαβλέπειν τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ μὴ φεύγειν.

<sup>4</sup> *I.c.* *ad fin.* ἵνα μὴ προδιαβληθεὶς ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον προπαιδευθεὶς εὐμενὴς καὶ φίλος καὶ οἰκεῖος ὑπὸ ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται.

attitude which even Aristophanes feels constrained to take up in relation to his art. He proclaims that the comic poet not only ministers to the enjoyment of the community and educates their taste, he is also a moral teacher and political adviser. "Comedy too is acquainted with justice."<sup>1</sup> It mixes earnest with its fun.<sup>2</sup> In the Parabasis of the *Acharnians* Aristophanes claims to be the best of poets for having had the courage to tell the Athenians what was right.<sup>3</sup> Good counsel he gives and will always give them; as for his satire it shall never light on what is honest and true.<sup>4</sup> He likens himself elsewhere to another Heracles, who attacks not ordinary human beings, but Cleons and other monsters of the earth, and who in ridding the city of such plagues deserves the title of "cleanser of the land."<sup>5</sup> The censure he passes on Euripides is primarily a moral censure. Even where the judgment may seem to be of an aesthetic kind a moral motive underlies it.

<sup>1</sup> *Acharn.* 500 τὸ γὰρ δίκαιον οἶδε καὶ τρυγῶδία.

*Frogs* 686-7 τὸν ἱερὸν χρόνον δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει  
 ξυμπαραινεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν.

<sup>2</sup> *Frogs* 389-90 καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γέλοιά μ' εἰ-  
 πεῖν, πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα.

<sup>3</sup> *Acharn.* 645. ὅστις παρεκινδύνευσ' εἰπεῖν ἐν Ἀθηναίοις τὰ δίκαια.

<sup>4</sup> *Acharn.* 656-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Wasps* 1029-1045.



Euripides is to him a bad citizen and a bad poet. In him are embodied all the tendencies of the time which the older poet most abhors ; he is the spirit of the age personified, with its restlessness, its scepticism, its sentimentalism, its unsparing questioning of old traditions, of religious usages and civic loyalty ; its frivolous disputations, which unfit men for the practical work of life, its lowered idea of courage and patriotism. Every phase of the sophistic spirit he discovers in Euripides. There is a bewildering dialectic which perplexes the moral sense. Duties whose appeals to the conscience are immediate and which are recognised as having a binding force are in Euripides subjected to analysis. Again, Euripides is censured for exciting feeling by any means that come to hand. When Dicaeopolis in the *Acharnians* is about to plead his case with his head on the block, he borrows from Euripides the rags and tatters of his hero Telephus. He carries off with him all the stage properties of woe, so that Euripides exclaims, " My good man, you will rob me of my stock-in-trade." <sup>1</sup> Tragic pity, Aristophanes implies, is debased in Euripides to an ignoble sentimentalism. Genuine misery does not consist in a

<sup>1</sup> *Acharn.* 464 ἄνθρωπ', ἀφαιρήσει με τὴν τραγῳδίαν.

beggar's rags or in a hobbling gait. Euripides substitutes a sensuous gratification for genuine tragic emotion. We are not here concerned with the fairness of the criticism but only with the point of view of the critic; and the coincidence of the moral and aesthetic judgment in Aristophanes is especially noteworthy. He puts into the mouth of Aeschylus, his ideal tragedian, the saying that the poet is the instructor of grown men as the teacher is of youth,<sup>1</sup> and even the comic stage is, in the theory if not according to the practice of Aristophanes, the school of the mature citizen.

Aristotle's treatment of poetry in the *Poetics* stands in complete contrast to this mode of criticism. In the *Politics* he had already dealt with the fine arts as they present themselves to the statesman and the social reformer. He allows that for childhood the use of poetry and music is to convey moral instruction, and that some forms of poetry, like some kinds of plastic art, exercise a dangerous influence on youth. But the true end of an art is not to be judged by the use to which it may be put in training immature minds. He tacitly combats the position of Plato who

<sup>1</sup> *Frogs* 1055-6 .

τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν  
ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖς ἡβῶσιν δὲ ποιηταί.

admits poetry to his commonwealth only so far as it is subsidiary to moral and political education, and who therefore excludes every form of it except hymns and chaunts and praises of great and good men, or what we call by the general name of didactic poetry. He distinguishes between educational use and aesthetic enjoyment. For the grown man the poet's function is not that of a teacher, or if a teacher he is only so by accident. The object of poetry, as of all the fine arts, is to produce an emotional delight, a pure and elevated pleasure. In the *Poetics* he writes as the literary critic and the historian of poetry. He is no longer concerned with fine art as an institution which the State recognises, and which should form part of an educational system. His inquiry is into the different forms of poetry,—their origin, their growth, the laws of their structure, their effect upon the mind. He analyses poetical compositions as he might the forms of thought. He seeks to discover what they are in themselves, and how they produce their distinctive effects. The didactic point of view is abandoned. We hear nothing of the ethical influence which the several kinds of poetry exert on the spectator or the reader, or of the moral intention of the poet.

Personal satire is ranked as an inferior type of art not because it encourages low scandal or debases character, but because art ought to represent the general not the particular.<sup>1</sup> Neither in the definition of tragedy (ch. 6. 1), if properly understood, nor in the subsequent discussion of it, is there anything to lend countenance to the view that the office of tragedy is to work upon men's lives, and to make them better. The theatre is not the school. The character of the ideal tragic hero (ch. 13) is deduced not from any ethical ideal of conduct, but from the need of calling forth the blended emotions of pity and fear, wherein the proper tragic pleasure resides. The catastrophe by which virtue is defeated and villainy in the end comes out triumphant is condemned by the same criterion ;<sup>2</sup> and on a similar principle the prosaic justice, misnamed "poetical," which rewards the good man and punishes the wicked, is pronounced to be appropriate only to comedy.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's critical judgments on poetry rest on aesthetic and logical grounds, they take no account of ethical aims or tendencies. He mentions Euripides some

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 5. 1451 b 11-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 13. 2. 1452 b 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Poet.* 13. 8. 1453 a 36. Contrast Plato who would compel the poet to exhibit the perfect requital of vice and virtue (*Laws* ii. 660 E).

twenty times in the *Poetics*, and in the great majority of instances with censure. He points out numerous defects, such as inartistic structure, bad character-drawing, a wrong part assigned to the chorus; but not a word is there of the immoral influence of which we hear so much in Aristophanes. Twice indeed he refers to the Menelaus of Euripides as an instance of an "unnecessarily bad" character;<sup>1</sup> the requirements of the play, that is, do not demand it. In his praise as little as in his blame does Aristotle look to the moral content of a poem. Sophocles he admires not for the purity of his ethical teaching or for his deep religious intuitions, but for the unity which pervades the structure of his dramas, and the closely linked sequence of parts which work up to an inevitable end. Not that Aristotle would set aside as a matter of indifference the moral content of a poem or the moral character of the author. Nay, they are all-important factors in producing the total impression which has to be made upon the hearer. Tragedy being the "imitation of life and of human welfare and human misery,"<sup>2</sup> the pleasure it communicates

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 15. 5. 1454 a 28; 25. 19. 1461 b 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 6. 9. 1450 a 16.

could not conceivably be derived from a poem which misinterprets human destiny, and holds up low ideals of life and of conduct. None the less Aristotle maintains that the end of poetry is pleasure. If the poet fails in producing it, he fails in that which is the specific function of his art. He may be good as a teacher, but as a poet or artist he is bad.

Thus Aristotle attempted to separate the function of aesthetics from that of morals. Few of his successors followed out this line of thought; and the prevailing Greek tradition that the primary office of poetry was to convey ethical teaching was carried on through the schools of Greek rhetoric till it was firmly established in the Roman world. The Aristotelian doctrine as it has been handed down to modern times has frequently taken the tinge of Roman thought, and has been made to combine in equal measure the "utile" with the "dulce." Sir Philip Sidney, for example, who in his *Apology for Poetry* repeatedly states that the end of poetry is "delightful teaching," or "to teach and to delight," has no suspicion that he is following the *Ars Poetica* of Horace rather than that of Aristotle. The view of Sidney was that of the Elizabethan age in general. It was

a departure from tradition when Dryden wrote in the spirit of Aristotle, "I am satisfied if it (verse) cause delight ; for delight is the chief if not the only end of poesy : instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights."<sup>1</sup>

## VII. POETIC UNIVERSALITY ILLUSTRATED FROM GREEK LITERATURE

IT is characteristic of Aristotle's method that he starts from concrete facts, and that his rules are in the main a generalisation from those facts. He is, in the first instance, a Greek summing up Greek experience. The treasure-house of Greek art and poetry lay open before him ; a vast body of literature, lost to us, was in his hands. He looked back upon the past, conscious, it would seem, that the great creative era was closed, and that in the highest regions at least of artistic composition the Greek genius had reached the summit of its powers. The time was ripe for criticism to take a survey of the whole field of poetic literature. Aristotle approaches the subject as the historian

<sup>1</sup> *Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poetry.*

of poetry, but his generalising faculty impels him to seek the law in the facts, and from the observed effects of different kinds of poetry to penetrate to the essential character of each. If his rules have proved in most cases to be not merely rules of Greek art but principles of art, it is because first, the Greek poets contain so much that appeals to universal human nature, and because next, Aristotle was able from the mass of literature before him to disengage and to formulate this universal element. The laws that he discovers are those which were already impressed on the chief productions of the Greek genius. It is hardly true what has been sometimes claimed for Aristotle, that he rose above the traditions and limitations of the Hellenic mind, and took up the attitude of the purely human or cosmopolitan spectator. On some points, doubtless, he expresses opinions which contradict the current ideas of his age. He admits that in exceptional cases the tragic poet may take entirely fictitious subjects instead of the well-known legends.<sup>1</sup> He holds that metre, which was popularly thought to be the most essential element of poetry, is in truth the least essential, if indeed it is essential at all.<sup>2</sup> But in

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 8. 1451 b 23.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 246.



general it remains true that Greek experience was the starting-point and basis of his theory, though that experience had to be sifted, condensed, and interpreted, before any coherent doctrine of poetry could be framed or judgment passed on individual authors. Aristotle does not accept even the greater tragedians as all of equal authority, or all their works as alike canons of art; and it is a mistake to assume that the precepts of the *Poetics* must, if there is no indication to the contrary, harmonise with the practice of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, if not of minor writers also. His rules are based on a discriminating and selective principle, and imply some criterion for judging of artistic excellence.

The principles of art as laid down by Aristotle faithfully reflect the Greek genius in the exclusion of certain tendencies to which other nations have yielded. First, pure realism is forbidden; that is, the literal and prosaic imitation which reaches perfection in a jugglery of the senses by which the copy is mistaken for the original. In the decay of Greek art this kind of ingenuity came into vogue, but it never found favour in the best times. Even the custom of setting up votive statues of athletes who had been thrice victors in the games

did not lead to a realism such as in Egypt was the outcome of the practice which secured the dead man's immortality through the material support of a portrait statue. Next, pure symbolism is forbidden, — those fantastic shapes which attracted the imagination of Oriental nations, and which were known to the Greeks themselves in the arts of Egypt and Assyria. The body of a lion with the head of a man and the wings and feathers of a bird was an attempt to render abstract attributes in forms which do not correspond with the idea. Instead of the concrete image of a living organism the result is an impossible compound which in transcending nature violates nature's laws. The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, with its impossible adventures by sea and land, its magic ship, its enchanted islands, its men transformed into swine, its vision of the world below, is constructed according to the laws of poetic truth. The whole is a faithful representation of human life and action, the irrational elements (τὰ ἄλογα) being but accessories that do not disturb the main impression. They are presented to the imagination with such vividness and coherence that the impossible becomes plausible, the fiction looks like truth.

That these principles were arrived at after due

observation of Oriental art is very improbable. Familiar as Aristotle must have been with the external characteristics of this art and with specimens of Greek workmanship which had been moulded under its influence, there is no express allusion to Eastern works of art in his writings. The omission is not explained simply by saying that he did not set himself the task of writing a treatise on sculpture, and that his sole concern was with poetry. Yet, had he given serious thought to the plastic art of the East, as he certainly did to that of his own country, some trace of it would probably have been found in his writings; just as his observation of Greek models led him to drop many detached remarks on painting and sculpture. To learn a barbarous tongue, however, was so uncongenial to a Greek that even the all-acquisitive mind of Aristotle was content to remain ignorant of every literature but his own; and it may have seemed an equal waste of labour to study the symbolism of a barbarous art.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is strange how little notice the Greeks took of symbolical art. Dion Chrysostom (*circ.* 100 A.D.) *Olympic*. (xii.), 404 R., in a speech put into the mouth of Phidias defends the plastic art of Greece, which expresses the divine nature in human form. The human body serves indeed as a symbol of the invisible, but it is a nobler symbolism than that of the barbarians, who in animal shapes dis-

Oriental art on the face of it was not a rational and intelligent creation ; it had no counterpart in the world of reality.

The Greek imagination of the classical age is under the strict control of reason, it is limited by a sense of measure and a faculty of self-restraint. It does not like the Oriental run riot in its own prodigal wealth. We are always conscious of a reserve of power, a temperate strength which knows its own resources and employs them without effort and without ostentation. The poet, the historian, the artist, each of them could do much more if he chose, but he does not care to dazzle us. He is bent on seeing truly, on seeing harmoniously, and on expressing what he sees. The

cover the divine image. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* vi. 19 discusses the point at greater length. Apollonius is here supporting the method of Greek sculpture as contrasted with the grotesque forms under which the gods were represented in Egypt (ἄτοπα καὶ γελοῖα θεῶν εἶδη). Thespision, with whom he is conversing, argues that the wisdom of the Egyptians is shown chiefly in this, that they give up the daring attempt directly to reproduce the deity, and by symbol and allegory produce a more impressive effect. Σοφὸν γὰρ εἶπερ τι Αἰγυπτίων καὶ τὸ μὴ θρασύνεσθαι ἐς τὰ τῶν θεῶν εἶδη, ξυμβολικὰ δὲ αὐτὰ ποιεῖσθαι καὶ ὑπονοούμενα, καὶ γὰρ ἂν καὶ σεμνότερα οὕτω φαίνοιτο. To which Apollonius replies that the effect would have been still more impressive if instead of fashioning a dog or goat or ibis they had offered no visible representation, and left it to the imagination, which is a better artist, to give form and shape to the divinity.

• materials on which his imagination works are fused and combined according to the laws of what is possible, reasonable, natural. Greek mythology as it has come to us in literature bears on it this mark of reasonableness. Traces indeed there are of an earlier type,—rude and unassimilated elements, flaws which have been left untouched by the shaping hand of the poet or by the constructive genius of the race. But compare Greek mythology with that of other nations, and we cannot but wonder at its freedom from the extravagant and grotesque. The Greeks in creating their gods in their own likeness followed that imperious instinct of their nature, which required that every product of their minds should be a harmonious and intelligible creation, not a thing half in the world, half out of it, no hybrid compound of symbolic attributes.

To watch the formation of the Homeric Olympus is to see the Greek mind working in its own artistic fashion. The several tribes, Achaeans, Argives, Minyae, and a host of others, have each their local gods and goddesses, uncharacterised, unspecialised, save by the vague omnipotence of godhead. With the victory of dominant races and the fusion of cults there came

a redistribution of functions and attributes, that might have issued in unmeaning chaos or in bare abstractions. Not so with the Greeks. From the motley assemblage of tribal divinities the Homeric gods stand out clear and calm as their own statues. The gods of other nations may be but the expression of the people's practical needs, or the abstracted utterance of their thought. The gods of the Greeks are fashioned by a race of artists in accordance with nature, but completing and transcending her. The mythologist notes how in the assignment of their spheres and duties all that is non-essential is eliminated. Attributes which a god already has in common with other gods fall out. The Homeric Olympus is a great gathering of living type-forms, whose image henceforth haunted the imagination of the race.

It would not be true to say that the lighter play of fancy is excluded from the literature and mythology of the Greeks. Few nations have taken more delight in weaving airy and poetic fictions apart from all reality, made out of nothing and ending nowhere. Almost all the Greek poets have something of this national taste. It breaks out at moments even in the prose writers, in Herodotus or Plato. In one domain, that of

• comedy, fancy seems at first sight to reign supreme and uncontrolled. It obeys its own laws and revels in its own absurdities. It turns the world upside down, and men and gods follow its bidding. The poet yields in thorough abandonment to the spirit of the festival, he leads the orgy and shares its madness and intoxication. No sooner is he launched on its course than he is carried wherever an exuberant poetic fancy and a gift of inextinguishable laughter lead him. The transitions from jest to earnest are as quick as thought. Whole scenes follow one another in which no single word can be taken seriously. Yet even comedy has its lucid intervals, or rather in its madness there is a method. In its wildest freaks there is some underlying reason, some intelligible drift and purpose. The fantastic license, however, of comedy stands alone in Greek literature. In other departments fancy is much more restrained, more reserved. It breaks through as a sudden and transient light, as gleams that come and go, it does not disturb the serenity of thought.

The Greeks themselves were accustomed to speak of poetic genius as a form of madness. It is the doctrine of Plato in the *Ion*, in the *Phaedrus*, in the *Symposium*. Even Aristotle, who some-

times writes as if the faculty of the logician were enough to construct a poem, says "poetry is a thing inspired."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he more accurately distinguishes two classes of poets,—the man of flexible genius who can assume another character, and the man of fine frenzy, who is lifted out of his own nature, who loses his own personality, and forgets himself.<sup>2</sup> In another place we read of a poet who never composed so well as when he was in "ecstasy" or delirium;<sup>3</sup> but of these compositions no specimens survive. Of the great poets of Greece, however, we can say with certainty that whatever was the exact nature of their madness, inspiration, ecstasy, call it what you will, they never released themselves from the sovereignty of reason. Capricious and inconsequent they were not. Their imaginative creations even in their most fantastic forms obeyed a hidden law.

Lamb's essay on "The Sanity of True Genius" may be illustrated from Greek poetry as fitly as from Shakespeare. "So far from the position holding true, that great wit (or genius, in our modern way

<sup>1</sup> *Rhet.* iii. 7. 1408 b 19, ἐνθεον γὰρ ἡ ποίησις.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 17. 2. 1455 a 34 where ἐκστατικοί, though not absolutely necessary, seems a highly probable correction for ἐξεταστικοί.

<sup>3</sup> *Probl.* xxx. i. 954 a 38, Μαρακὸς δὲ ὁ Συρακούσιος καὶ ἀμείνων ἦν ποιητὴς ὅτ' ἐκστατῇ.



of speaking) has a necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers. . . . But the true poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it. . . . Where he seems most to recede from humanity he will be found the truest to it. From beyond the scope of Nature if he summon possible existences, he subjugates them to the law of her consistency. He is beautifully loyal to that sovereign directress, even when he appears most to betray and desert her." The perfect sanity of the Greek genius is intimately connected with its universality. For is not insanity a kind of disordered individualism? The madman is an egoist; he takes his own fancies as the measure of all things. He does not correct his impressions, or compare them with those of others, or bring them into harmony with external fact. The test of a man's sanity is the relation in which his mind stands to the universal. We call a man sane not only when his ideas form a coherent whole in themselves, but fit in with the laws and facts of the outer world and with the universal human reason. Is not all this in keeping with Aristotle's theory that the effort of poetry is towards the universal; that

it represents the permanent possibilities of human nature, the essentials rather than the accidents, the type rather than the individual? The poet does not on the one hand create by random guesswork, nor yet does he merely record what has happened. He tells what may happen according to laws of internal probability or necessity. The sequence of poetry is not the empirical sequence of fact but the logical or conceivable sequence of ideas. What it states is true wherever human nature exists; it is applicable to every age and country; it eliminates chance and discovers unity and significance in characters and events.

All great poetry and art fulfil this law of universality, but none perhaps so perfectly as the poetry and art of the Greeks. Take a single instance,—the delineation of female character in Greek poetry. The heroines of Homer and of the tragedians are broadly and unmistakably human. In real life woman is less individual than man; she runs less into idiosyncrasies, she conforms rather to the general type. This however, it may be said, is owing to the deference she pays to the conventional rules of society, it is due to artificial causes that do not reach to the founda-

- tions of character. But an inwardly eccentric woman is also rare. Go below the surface and you find that with all outward marks of difference, whether of fashion or of manner, and in spite of a caprice that has become proverbial, female character can be reduced to certain elemental types of womanhood. These essential types are few. Maiden, wife, mother, daughter, sister,—here are the great determining relations of life. They form the groundwork of character. Accident may modify character, circumstances may stamp it with a particular expression, and bring into relief this or that dominant feature. But there remains an ideal mould in which the type is cast. Once the deeper springs of feeling are moved, circumstances are thrust aside, and a woman's action may almost with certainty be predicted. The superiority of the Greeks over all but the very greatest of the moderns in portraying female character is probably due to their power of seizing and expressing the universal side of human nature—that side which is primary and fundamental in woman. They “followed,” as Coleridge says of Shakespeare, “the main march of the human affections.” The vulgar and obtrusive elements of personality are

cast off, and in proportion as the characters are divested of what is purely individual, do they gain in interest and elevation. Penelope, Nausicaa, Andromache, Antigone, Iphigenia, are beings far less complex than the heroines of a dozen novels that come out now in a single year. Their beauty and truth lie precisely in their typical humanity. Nor, in gaining universal significance, do the women of Greek literature fade into abstract types. The finer shades of character are not excluded by the simplicity with which the main lines are drawn. In discarding what is accidental their individuality is not obliterated but deepened and enriched; for it is not disordered emotion or perplexity of motive that makes a character poetical, but power of will or power of love. Attentive study of such a poetic creation as Antigone reveals innumerable subtle traits illustrative of the general principle of Greek art by which the utmost variety of detail is admitted, if only it contributes to the total impression and is subject to a controlling unity of design.

For many centuries the standing quarrel of Greek literature had been between the poets and the philosophers. Poetry, said the philosophers, is all fiction, and immoral fiction too; philosophy

- seeks the good and the true. Plato, inheriting the ancient dislike of the wise men towards poetry, banished the poets from his ideal republic. Aristotle would heal the strife. He finds there is a meeting-point between poetry and philosophy in the relation in which they stand to the universal. We should have been glad if he had explained the exact distinction between them, as he conceived it ; clearly, as we have already seen, he did not intend to merge poetry in philosophy. His general theory, as it has been above set forth, does not permit us to mark the difference between the two methods much more precisely than by saying that poetry is akin to philosophy in so far as it aims at expressing the universal ; but that poetry expresses the universal in sensuous and imaginative form, not like philosophy in terms of abstract reasoning. In this sense poetry is a concrete philosophy, "a criticism of life" and of the universe. This is completely true only of the higher creations of poetry, not of mere jets of poetical fancy. But of the great poets of all nations—of the poems of Homer, of Aeschylus, of Shakespeare, of Dante—it undoubtedly holds good. There is in them an interpretation of man and of life and of the world ; a connected scheme

and view of things not systematised or consciously unfolded, but latent, underlying the poet's thought and essential to the unity of the poem. Poets, too, even of an inferior order, who, like Wordsworth, are capable of presenting truly, if not the whole of life, yet certain definite aspects of it in imaginative form, are in their own way philosophers. They embody a consistent and harmonious wisdom of their own.

Between poetry and philosophy there had been an ancient feud. It was otherwise with poetry and history. Here at first there was no opposition. "Poetry," says Bacon, "is feigned history;" much of the poetry of the Greeks might be called authentic history,—true not in precision of detail or in the record of personal adventures, but in its indication of the larger outlines of events and its embodiment in ideal form of the past deeds of the race. Aristotle himself speaks of the myths as history; what they contain are actual facts (*τὰ γινόμενα*); the names of the characters are "historical" (*γενόμενα ὀνόματα*) as opposed to fictitious (*πεποιημένα*) names.<sup>1</sup> Greek tragedy was indeed historical, but it drew its facts not from recent history or contemporaneous events.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 6-7. 1451 b 15 *sqq.*

- The tragedian was the successor of the epic poet, who was the earliest historian of the Greek race and the keeper of its archives. Homer, it is true, is not to us as he was to the Greeks the minute and literal chronicler of the Trojan war. We may smile when we think of lines of Homer being quoted and accepted as evidence in the settlement of an international claim. Yet his poems are still historical documents of the highest value ; and that not merely as reflecting the life of the poet's age, the sentiments and manners of the heroic society of which he formed a part, but also as preserving the popular traditions of Greece. Not many years ago it was the fashion to speak of the legendary history of Greece as legend and nothing more. Art and archaeology are every day adding fresh testimony as to its substantial truth. Explorations and excavations are restoring the traditional points of contact between Greece and Asia Minor. Famous dynasties which not long since had been resolved into sun-myths again stand out as historical realities. Troy, Tiryns, Mycenae rest on sure foundations ; their past greatness, their lines of princes, their relations with outside states, are not the dreams of poetic imagination. The kernel of truth, which was

thought to be non-existent or undiscoverable, is being extracted by the new appliances of the historic method.

The Hellenic people, in short, are found to have perpetuated their history with marvellous fidelity through popular myth. Myth was the unwritten literature of an early people, whose instinctive language was poetry. It was at once their philosophy and their history. It enshrined their unconscious theories of life, their reflections upon things human and divine. It recorded all that they knew about their own past, about their cities and families, the geographical movements of their tribes and the exploits of ancestors. Myth to the Greeks was not simply what we mean by legend. Aristotle observes that the poet is none the less a poet or maker though the incidents of his poem should chance to be actual events; for some actual events have that internal stamp of the probable or possible which makes them the subject-matter of poetry.<sup>1</sup> Such were the "actual events" recorded in myth. They lay ready to the poet's hand as an anonymous work, touched by the imagination of an artistic race, many of them hardly needing to be recast

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 9. 1451 b 30.



- from the poetic mould in which they lay. Truth and fiction were here fused together, and the collective whole was heroic history. This was the idealising medium through which the past became poetical; it afforded that imaginative remoteness which enabled the hearers to escape from present realities. It lifted them into a higher sphere of existence where the distractions of the present were forgotten in the thrilling stories of an age which, though distant, appealed to them by many associations. The Athenians fined Phrynichus for his *Capture of Miletus* not because the event it represented was historical instead of mythical, but because it was recent and painful history. As the fairy land of fancy was to Spenser

“The world’s sweet inn from pain and wearisome turmoil,”

so the Greeks looked to poetry as a refuge from the miseries and toilsomeness of life. The comic poet Timocles in explaining the effect of tragedy gives expression to the common sentiment of Greece. “The mind, made to forget its own sufferings and moved with interest at another’s woe, carries away instruction and delight.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Timocles, Διονυσιάζουσαι. Meineke, *Com. Frag.* ii. 800,

ὁ γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ἰδίων λήθην λαβὼν

Greek poetry and art with true historic sense did not take the present as an isolated point, but projected it into the past, whose half-effaced outlines were restored by the imagination. Myth was the golden link which bound together the generations. The odes of Pindar are a case in point. The poet starting from the individual victor in the games, raises the interest above the personal level and beyond the special occasion, by giving historical perspective and background to the event. The victor's fortunes are connected with the annals of his house, with the trials and triumphs of the past. Nor does the poet stop at the deeds of ancestors. The mention of a common ancestor, of a Heracles, will transport him from Lacedaemon to Thessaly. He passes outside the family and the city and sweeps with rapid glance from colony to mother-city, from city to country, from the personal to the Panhellenic interest.

πρὸς ἄλλοτρίῳ τε ψυχαγωγηθεὶς πάθει  
μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἀπῆλθε παιδευθεὶς ἅμα.

Cp. Hesiod, *Theog.* 96-103—

εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ  
ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ αἰοιδὸς  
Μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων  
ὑμνήσῃ, μάκαράς τε θεούς, οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,  
αἰψ' ὃ γ' εὖ δυσφρονέων ἐπιλήθεται, οὐδέ τι κηδέων  
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.

Thus the ode is more than an occasional poem, and the theme as it is unfolded acquires a larger meaning. "The victor is transfigured into a glorious personification of his race, and the present is reflected, magnified, illuminated in the mirror of the mythic past."<sup>1</sup> The ode rises by clear ascents from the individual to the universal.

It is this that constitutes Greek idealism. The world of reality and the world of imagination were not for the Greeks separate spheres which stood apart; the breath of poetry kindled the facts of experience and the traditions of the past. The ideal in Greek art was not the opposite of the real, but rather its fulfilment and perfection. Each sprang out of the same soil; the one was the full-blown flower of which the other was the germ. And one chief means by which the Greek poet was able to idealise the real was the historic myth.

<sup>1</sup> Gildersleeve, *Pindar*, Intr. p. xviii. whom I have followed in this paragraph.

## VIII. THE FUNCTION OF TRAGEDY

Aristotle's definition of tragedy<sup>1</sup> runs thus:—

“Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, by means of language embellished with each of the different kinds of embellishment, which are separately employed in the several parts; in the form of action not of narrative; effecting through pity and fear the proper *katharsis*, or purgation, of these<sup>2</sup> emotions.” The “different kinds of embellishment” are presently explained to be metre and

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 6. 2. 1449 b 24 sqq. ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἔχουσης, ἡδυσημένη λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ (vulg. ἐκάστου) τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαινουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

<sup>2</sup> τῶν τοιούτων has given rise to much misunderstanding. It is not “all such emotions” or “these and suchlike emotions,” but by a frequent and idiomatic use “the aforesaid emotions,” namely, pity and fear. It is with these, and these only, that tragedy is concerned throughout the *Poetics*. There is perhaps, as Reinkens (p. 161) says, a delicate reason here for the preference of τῶν τοιούτων over the demonstrative. The ἔλεος and φόβος of the definitions, as will be evident in the sequel, are the aesthetic emotions of pity and fear, those which are awakened by the tragic representation. τῶν τοιούτ. παθημ. are the emotions of pity and fear which belong to real life, and which are expelled by the aesthetic emotions. The use of τοιούτων instead of τοιούτων might have suggested that the feelings were identically the same.

- melody ; metre without music being employed in the dialogue, lyrical song in the choral parts.

From this definition it appears first, that the *genus* of tragedy is Imitation. This it has in common with all the fine arts. Next, it is differentiated from comedy as being “an imitation of a serious<sup>1</sup> action”; not low or trivial or merely laughable, but an action which is concerned with the true τέλος or end of life: it is thus a picture of human life and destiny on its serious side. Further, it is differentiated in form from Epic poetry: it is dramatic not narrative. The remainder of the definition describes the specific effect, the proper function of tragedy,—namely, to produce a certain kind of *katharsis*. It would be a curious study to collect the many and strange translations that have been given of this definition in the last three hundred years. Almost every word of it has been misinterpreted in one way or another. But after all it contains only two real difficulties. The one lies in the clause concerning the “different kinds of embellishment.” Fortunately, however, Aristotle has interpreted this for us himself; otherwise it

<sup>1</sup> σπονδαία here is “serious,” not “moral” or “virtuous”; its antithesis would be φαύλη as applied to comedy.

would doubtless have provoked volumes of criticism. The other and more fundamental difficulty relates to the meaning of the *katharsis*. Here we seek in vain for any direct aid from the *Poetics*.

A great historic discussion has centred round the phrase. No passage, probably, in ancient literature has been so frequently handled by commentators, critics, and poets, by men who knew Greek, and by men who knew no Greek. A tradition almost unbroken through centuries saw in it an allusion to a moral effect which tragedy produces through the "purification of the passions." What the precise effect is, and what are the passions on which tragedy works, was very variously interpreted. Corneille, Racine, Lessing, each offered different solutions, but all agreed in assuming the purely ethical intention of the drama. Goethe protested; but his own most interesting theory<sup>1</sup> is for linguistic reasons quite impossible, nor does it accord with much else that is contained in the *Poetics*. It was little more than thirty years ago (1857) that a pamphlet by Jacob Bernays<sup>2</sup> reopened the whole question,

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Nachlese zu Aristoteles Poetik*, 1826.

<sup>2</sup> Republished in 1880 in the volume *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Aristotelische Theorie des Drama* (Berlin).

and gave a new direction to the argument. His main idea had been forestalled by one or two earlier critics, but it had never been fully worked out and had hitherto attracted but little notice.

Bernays, with equal learning and literary skill, proved that *katharsis* here is a medical metaphor,<sup>1</sup> "purgation," and denotes a pathological effect on the soul analogous to the effect of medicine on the body. The thought in its simplest form may be expressed thus. Tragedy excites the emotions of pity and fear,—kindred emotions that are in the breasts of all men,—and by the act of excitation affords a pleasurable relief. The feelings called forth by the tragic spectacle are not indeed permanently removed, but are quieted for the time, so that the system can fall back upon its normal course. The stage, in fact, provides a harmless and pleasurable outlet for

<sup>1</sup> The three chief meanings of the word, 1. the medical, 2. the religious or liturgical, "lustratio" or "expiatio," and 3. the moral, "purificatio," are sometimes difficult to keep apart. In Plat. *Soph.* 230 B the medical metaphor is prominent. Refutation (ἐλεγχος) is a mode of κάθαρσις. Before knowledge can be imparted internal obstacles must be removed (τὰ ἐμποδίζοντα ἐκβαλεῖν). In *Crat.* 405 A doctors and soothsayers both use ἡ κάθαρσις καὶ οἱ καθαρμοί. In *Phaedo* 69 C the medical sense of κάθαρσις shades off into the religious, the transition being effected by the mention of καθαρμός.

instincts which demand satisfaction, and which can be indulged here more fearlessly than in real life.

Plato, it must be remembered, in his attack upon the drama had said that "the natural hunger after sorrow and weeping" which is kept under control in our own calamities, is satisfied and delighted by the poets. "Poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of starving them."<sup>1</sup> Through its tearful moods it enfeebles the manly temper; it makes anarchy in the soul by exalting the lower elements over the higher, and by dethroning reason in favour of feeling. Aristotle held that it is not desirable to kill or to starve the emotional part of the soul, and that the regulated indulgence of the feelings serves to maintain the balance of our nature. Tragedy, he would say, is a vent for the particular emotions of pity and fear. In the first instance, it is true, its effect is not to tranquillise but to excite. It excites emotion, however, only to allay it. Pity and fear, artificially stirred, expel the latent pity and fear which we bring with us from real life. In the pleasurable calm, which follows when the passion is spent, an emotional cure has been wrought.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* x. 606 D, τρέφει γὰρ ταῦτα ἄρδουσα, δέον αὐχμεῖν.

<sup>2</sup> Zeller (*Phil. der Gr.*) thinks it unimportant whether the medical



- It is worth noting, as has been pointed out by Bernays, and before him by Twining, that Milton, with the intuition at once of a poet and a scholar, apprehended something of the true import of Aristotle's words. In his preface to *Samson Agonistes* he writes :

"Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems ; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terrour, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions ; that is to temper or reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight stirred up by reading or seeing those passages well imitated. Nor is Nature herself wanting in her own efforts to make good his assertion, for so, in physick, things of melancholick hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours." In other words tragedy is a form of homoeopathic treatment, curing emotion by means of emotion.

or the religious use of the *katharsis* is primarily intended, as in either case the word bears a sense far removed from the original metaphor. But the distinctive method of relief is different in the two cases. The medical *katharsis* implies relief following upon previous excitation. There is first a *ταραχή* or *κίνησις*, then *κάθαρσις* or *ἐκκρίσις*. This is of vital moment for the argument. If we lose sight of the metaphor, the significance of the process is missed.

Aristotle, it would seem, was led to this remarkable theory by observing the effect of certain melodies upon a form of religious ecstasy, or, as the Greeks said, "enthusiasm," such as is rarely seen in this country, and whose proper home is in the East. The persons subject to such transports were regarded as men possessed by a god, and were taken under the care of the priesthood. The treatment prescribed for them was so far homoeopathic in character, that it consisted in applying movement to cure movement, in soothing the internal trouble of the mind by a wild and restless music. The passage in the *Politics*<sup>1</sup> in which Aristotle describes the operation of these tumultuous melodies is the key to the meaning of *katharsis* in the *Poetics*. Such music is expressly distinguished by Aristotle from the music which has a moral effect or educational value (*παιδείας ἔνεκεν*). It differs, again, from those forms of music whose end is

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1341 b 32—1342 a 15. For *ἐνθουσιασμός* as a morbid state to be cured by music see Aristides Quintilianus (*circa* 100 A.D.) *περὶ μουσικῆς* B. ii. p. 157, quoted and explained in Döring p. 332 *cp.* p. 261. There the healing process is denoted by *καταστέλλεσθαι, ἀπομειλίττεσθαι, ἐκκαθαίρεσθαι*. The music employed is called *αὐμμησίς τις* (*i.e.* of the enthusiasm) which shows that the musical *κάθαρσις* is a kind of homoeopathic cure.

• either relaxation (πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν) or the higher aesthetic enjoyment (πρὸς διαγωγὴν). Its object is *katharsis*. It is a physical stimulus, which provides an outlet for religious fervour. Patients, who have been submitted to this process, "fall back," to quote Aristotle's phrase, "into their normal state, as if they had undergone a medical or purgative treatment."<sup>1</sup> The emotional result is a "harmless joy" (χαρὰν ἀβλαβή).

The homoeopathic cure of morbid "enthusiasm" by means of music, was, it may be incidentally observed, known also to Plato. In a passage of the *Laws*,<sup>2</sup> where he is laying down rules for the management of infants, his advice is that infants should be kept in perpetual motion, and live as if they were always tossing at sea. He proceeds to compare the principle on which religious ecstasy is cured by a strain of impassioned music, with the method of nurses, who lull their babies to sleep not by silence but

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1342 a 10, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ λατρίας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως. The ὥσπερ marks the introduction of the metaphor. *λατρ.* is explained by the more specific term *κάθαρσ.* *καθίστασθαι* is also a *verb. prop.* in medicine, either of the patient relapsing into his natural state or of the disease settling down (cp. Döring p. 328). In the same passage of the *Politics* 1342 a 14 the medical metaphor is kept up in *κουφίζεσθαι* "obtain relief."

<sup>2</sup> *Laws* vii. 790-1.

by singing, not by holding them quiet but by rocking them in their arms. Fear, he thinks, is in each case the emotion that has to be subdued,—a fear caused by something that has gone wrong within. In each case the method of cure is the same; an external agitation (*κίνησις*) is employed to calm and counteract an internal. But Plato recognised the principle only as it applied to music and to the useful art of nursing. Aristotle, with his generalising faculty and his love of discovering unity in different domains of life, extended the principle to tragedy, and hints at even a wider application of it. In the *Politics*, after explaining the action of the musical *katharsis*, he adds, that “those who are liable to pity and fear, and in general, persons of emotional temperament pass through a like experience; . . . they all undergo a *katharsis* of some kind and feel a pleasurable relief.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1342 a 14, ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικούς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς, . . . καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαι τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ’ ἡδονῆς. Here *τινα κάθ.* implies that the *katharsis* in all cases is not precisely of the same kind. Hence we see the force of the article in the def. of tragedy, τὴν τῶν τοιούτ. παθ. καθ., the *specific katharsis*, that which is appropriate to these emotions. There is nothing in the *Poetics* to bear out the assumption of many commentators that epic poetry excites precisely the same emotions as tragedy.

The whole passage of the *Politics* here referred to is introduced by certain important prefatory words: "What we mean by *katharsis* we will now state in general terms (ἀπλῶς); hereafter we will explain it more clearly (ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον) in our treatise on Poetry."<sup>1</sup> But in the *Poetics*, as we have it, the much desired explanation is wanting; there appears to be a gap in the text at this most critical point. We are therefore driven back upon the *Politics* itself as our primary authority. The tone of the passage and particular expressions show two things plainly—first, that the term there is consciously metaphorical; secondly, that though its technical use in medicine was familiar, the metaphorical application of it was novel, and needed elucidation. Moreover, in the words last quoted,—"all undergo a *katharsis* of some kind,"—it is pretty plainly implied that the *katharsis* of pity and fear in tragedy is analogous to, but not identical with, the *katharsis* of enthusiasm.

Now, Bernays transferred the *katharsis* of the *Politics* almost without modification of meaning to the definition of tragedy. He limited its reference to the simple idea of an emotional

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1341 b 39.

relief, a pleasurable vent for overcharged feeling. This idea, no doubt, almost exhausts the meaning of the phrase as it is used in the *Politics*. It also expresses, as has been above explained, one important aspect of the tragic *katharsis*. But the word, as taken up by Aristotle into his terminology of art, has probably a further meaning. It expresses not only a fact of psychology or of pathology, but a principle of art. The original metaphor is in itself a guide to the full aesthetic significance of the term. In the medical language of the school of Hippocrates it strictly denotes not the entire expulsion of any given substance from the organism, but a partial expulsion,—the removal of a painful or disturbing element, and hence the purifying of what remains, by the elimination of alien matter.<sup>1</sup> Applying this to tragedy we observe that the feelings of pity and fear in real life contain a morbid and disturbing element. In the process of tragic excitation they find relief, and the morbid element is thrown off. As the tragic

<sup>1</sup> *κένωσις* in the Hippocratic writings denotes the entire removal of healthy but surplus humours; *κάθαρσις* the removal of τὰ λυπούντα and the like,—of “qualitatively alien matter” (τῶν ἀλλοτρίων κατὰ ποιότητα, Galen). Thus Galen xvi. 105, *κένωσις ὅταν ἅπαντες οἱ χυμοὶ ὁμοτίμως κενῶνται, κάθαρσις δὲ ὅταν οἱ μοχθηροὶ*

action progresses, when the tumult of the mind, first roused, has afterwards subsided, the lower forms of emotion—the fear and pity of reality—are found to have been transmuted into higher and more refined forms. The emotions are not so much *purged away* as *purged*. The curative and tranquillising influence that tragedy exercises follows as an immediate accompaniment of the transformation of feeling. Tragedy, then, does more than effect the homoeopathic cure of certain passions. Its function on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity or fear, but also to purge the emotions themselves, to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art.

But what is the nature of this clarifying process? Here we have no direct reply from Aristotle. But he has left us some few hints, some materials, out of which we may perhaps reconstruct the outlines of his thought.

κατὰ ποιότητα; cp. [Plat.] "Οροι 415 D, κάθαρσις ἀπὸ κρίσις χειρόνων ἀπὸ βελτιόνων. Where the thing to be removed not only contains a morbid element, but is in itself morbid, κάθαρσ. expresses its total expulsion. Thus in Plat. *Phaedo* 69 C, κάθαρσις τῶν τοιούτων πάντων (sc. ἡδονῶν) is "a purging away of these pleasures," relieving the soul of them. It is the soul not the pleasures that are in this case purged. Hence the expression is not exactly parallel to κάθαρσ. τῶν τοιούτ. παθημ. in the def. of tragedy as explained above.

The pity and fear of real life are each, by the definition of them in the *Rhetoric*, a form of pain (λύπη τις). Fear Aristotle defines to be "a species of pain or disturbance arising from an impression of impending evil which is destructive or painful in its nature."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the evil is near not remote, and the persons threatened are ourselves. Similarly, pity is "a sort of pain at an evident evil of a destructive or painful kind in the case of somebody who does not deserve it, the evil being one to which we may naturally expect ourselves or some one of our own friends to be liable, and this at a time when it appears to be near at hand."<sup>2</sup> Pity, however, turns into fear where the object is so nearly related to us that the suffering seems to be our own.<sup>3</sup> Thus pity and fear in Aristotle are strictly correlated feelings. We pity others where under like circumstances we should fear for ourselves.<sup>4</sup> Those who are

<sup>1</sup> Welldon's Trans. of *Rhet.* ii. 5. 1382 a 21, ἔστω δὴ φόβος λύπη τις ἢ ταραχὴ ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 8. 1385 b 13, ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ καὶ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκῆσειεν ἂν παθεῖν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ τινά, καὶ τοῦτο ὅταν πλήσιον φαίνεται.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 8. 1386 a 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* ii. 8. 1386 a 27.



- incapable of fear are incapable also of pity.<sup>1</sup> Thus in psychological analysis fear is the primary emotion from which pity derives its meaning. Pity contains in it a latent or potential fear; it is not, as in many modern writers, an unselfish sympathy with others' distress.

The conditions of dramatic representation, and above all the combined appeal which tragedy makes to both feelings, will considerably modify the emotions as they are known in actual reality. Pity in itself undergoes no essential change. It has still for its object the misfortunes of "one who is undeserving" (ὁ ἀνάξιος), which phrase, as interpreted by Aristotle (*Poet.* ch. xiii.), means not a wholly innocent sufferer, but rather a man who meets with sufferings beyond his deserts. Pity it is to which the primary appeal is made in tragedy. Fear comes in as a secondary and derivative feeling; and hence tragic fear differs sensibly from fear proper. The emotion is profoundly altered when it is transferred from the real to the imaginative world. It is no longer the direct apprehension of misfortune impending over our own life. It is not caused by the actual approach of danger. It is the reflex of the pity

<sup>1</sup> *Rhet.* ii. 8. 1385 b 20 sqq., cp. ii. 5. 1383 a 9.

that we feel for the tragic hero. His misfortunes make us tremble for ourselves<sup>1</sup>—unlikely as we are ever to be placed in circumstances identical with his.

The tragic sufferer is a man like ourselves (ὁ ὅμοιος); and on that likeness the whole effect of tragedy, as described in the *Poetics*, hinges. Without it he would fail to win our sympathy. The resemblance on which Aristotle insists is one of moral character. His hero (*Poet.* ch. xiii.) is a man not of flawless perfection, nor yet of consummate villainy; by which we must not understand that he has merely average or mediocre qualities. He rises, indeed, above the common level in moral elevation and dignity (*Poet.* ch. ii. and ch. xv.), but he is not free from frailties and imperfections. It may be noted that these conditions, while applicable enough to the ideal type of hero, must not be taken as absolute rules of tragic portraiture.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 13. 2. 1453 a 5, ἔλεος μὲν περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιον, φόβος δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον. If this passage stood alone, grammatical symmetry would lead us to suppose that as ὁ ἀνάξιος is the object of ἔλεος, so ὁ ὅμοιος is the object of φόβος: that our fear, in fact, is, in the first instance, for the tragic hero. But the chap. of the *Rhet.* on φόβος shows that in fear the primary reference is to ourselves. The περὶ therefore has a different sense in the two clauses: "we feel pity for ὁ ἀνάξιος: we feel fear in connection with ὁ ὅμοιος," i.e. his sufferings awaken our fear for ourselves.

Instances from the modern drama show how a character may become tragic, even if entirely wanting in moral nobility, by the aid of other gifts great in themselves and exhibited on the grand scale; by heightened powers of intellect or of will, however misdirected the ends to which they are turned. In any case, however, the ideal tragic character must have a rich and full humanity, elements which other men possess, but blended more harmoniously, or of more potent quality. So much human nature must there be in him that we are able in some sense to identify ourselves with him, to make his misfortunes our own.

But the tragic fear, though it has been modified in passing under the conditions of art, is not, in Aristotle, a languid sympathy. Being refracted through pity, it differs from the crushing apprehension of personal disaster. Yet it causes a thrill to run through us, a shudder of horror or of vague foreboding.<sup>1</sup> In the spectacle of another's crimes or sufferings, in the shocks and blows of circumstance, we read the uncertainty of all human fortunes. We are brought into a mood in which

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 14. I. 1453 b 4, ὥστε τὸν ἀκούοντα τὰ πράγματα γινόμενα καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἐλεεῖν.

we feel that we too are liable to suffering.<sup>1</sup> The object of dread is not a definite evil which threatens us at close quarters. But the vividness with which the imagination apprehends possible calamity produces the same intensity of impression as if the danger were at hand. Our fear becomes almost impersonal. Though its first reference is to ourselves, we do not sharply distinguish between ourselves and the hero in whose existence we have for the time merged our own, and whose fortunes are for us but a type of human destiny.

We can see now that the essential tragic effect depends on maintaining the intimate alliance between pity and fear. According to Aristotle, not pity alone is awakened by tragedy, as many moderns have held; not pity *or* fear, for which Corneille argued; not pity and admiration which is the version of the Aristotelian expression which is current in the Elizabethan writers. The Aristotelian requirement is pity *and* fear. In the phrase of the anonymous fragment, "On Comedy,"<sup>2</sup> which appears to contain some genuine Aristotelian tradition, "tragedy blends fear with pity in equal

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Rhet.* ii. 5. 1383 a 8, ὥστε δὲ τούτους παρασκευάζειν . . . ὅτι τοιοῦτοί εἰσιν οἷοι παθεῖν.

<sup>2</sup> Printed by Vahlen and Susemihl at the end of their editions of the *Poetics*, and commented on in detail by Bernays, p. 142 *sqq.*

- proportions" (ἡ τραγῳδία συμμετρίαν θέλει ἔχειν τοῦ φόβου). Pity, as Bernays explains, through its kinship with fear, is preserved from eccentricity and sentimentalism. Fear, through its alliance with pity, is divested of a narrow selfishness, of the vulgar terror which is inspired by personal danger. A self-absorbed anxiety or alarm makes us incapable of sympathy with others. In this sense "fear casts out pity."<sup>1</sup> Tragic fear, though it may send an inward shudder through the blood, does not paralyse the mind or stun the sense, as does the direct vision of some impending calamity. And the reason is that this fear, unlike the fear of common reality, is based on an imaginative union with another's life. The spectator is lifted out of himself. He becomes one with the tragic sufferer, and through him with humanity at large. One effect of the drama, said Plato, is that through it a man becomes many, instead of one; it makes him lose his proper personality in a pantomimic instinct, and so prove false to himself. Aristotle might reply: True; he passes out of himself, but it is through the enlarging power of

<sup>1</sup> *Rhet.* ii. 8. 1386 a 22, τὸ γὰρ δεινὸν ἕτερον τοῦ ἐλεεινοῦ καὶ ἐκκρουστικὸν τοῦ ἐλέου. Cp. 1385 b 33, οὐ γὰρ ἐλεοῦσιν οἱ ἐκπεπληγμένοι διὰ τὸ εἶναι πρὸς τῷ οικείῳ πάθει.

sympathy. He forgets his own petty sufferings. He quits the narrow sphere of the individual. He identifies himself with the fate of mankind.

We are here brought back to Aristotle's theory of poetry as a representation of the universal. Tragedy exemplifies with concentrated power this highest function of the poetic art. The characters it depicts, the actions and fortunes of the persons with whom it acquaints us, possess a typical and universal value. The artistic unity of plot, binding together the several parts of the play in close inward coherence, reveals the law of human destiny, the causes and effects of suffering. The incidents which thrill us are intensified in their effect, when to the shock of surprise is added the discovery that each thing as it has happened could not be otherwise; it stands in organic relation to what has gone before.<sup>1</sup> Pity and fear awakened in connection with these larger aspects of human suffering, and kept in close alliance with one another, become universalised emotions. What is purely personal and self-regarding drops away. The spectator who is brought face to face with grander sufferings than his own experiences a

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 9. 11. 1452 a 1-5, where the point lies in the union of the *παρὰ τὴν δόξαν* with the *δι' ἄλλα*.

- sympathetic ecstasy, or lifting out of himself. It is precisely in this transport of feeling, which carries a man outside his individual self, that the distinctive tragic pleasure resides. Pity and fear are purged of the impure element which clings to them in life. In the glow of tragic excitement these feelings are so transformed that the net result is an emotional delight.

It is not unlikely that originally the *katharsis*, viewed as a refining process, may have implied no more to Aristotle than the expulsion of the disturbing element, namely, the pain,<sup>1</sup> which enters into pity and fear when aroused by real objects. The mere fact of such an expulsion would have supplied him with a point of argument against Plato, in addition to the main line of reply above indicated.<sup>2</sup> In the *Philebus* Plato had described the mixed (*μιχθεῖσαι*) or impure (*ἀκάθαρτοι*) pleasures as those which have in them an alloy of pain; and the pleasure of tragedy was stated to be of the mixed order.<sup>3</sup> The Aristotelian theory

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Plut. *Symp. Qu.* iii. 8 (in reference to the musical *katharsis*), ὥσπερ ἡ θρηνωδία καὶ ὁ ἐπιτήδειος αὐλὸς ἐν ἀρχῇ πάθος κινεῖ καὶ δάκρυον ἐκβάλλει, προάγων δὲ τὴν ψύχην εἰς οἶκτον οὕτω κατὰ μικρὸν ἐξαιρεῖ καὶ ἀναλίσκει τὸ λυπητικόν:—a passage which is also instructive as to the *kathartie* method generally.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil.* 50 B.

asserts that the emotions on which tragedy works do indeed in real life contain a predominant mixture of pain, but that by artistic treatment they are transmuted into pure pleasure.

In the foregoing pages, however, we have carried the analysis a step farther, and shown how and why the pain becomes a pleasure. If it is objected that the notion of universalising the emotions and ridding them of an intrusive element that belongs to the sphere of the accidental and individual, is a modern conception, which we have no warrant for attributing to Aristotle, we may reply that if this is not what Aristotle meant, it is at least the natural outcome of his doctrine ; to this conclusion his general theory of poetry points.

Let us assume, then, that with the idea of an emotional relief the tragic *katharsis* involves the further idea of the purifying of the emotions so relieved. In accepting this interpretation we do not ascribe to tragedy a direct moral influence. The refinement of feeling under temporary and artificial excitement is still far removed from moral improvement. Tragedy, according to the definition, acts on the feelings not on the will. It does not make men better ; at the most it removes certain hindrances to virtue. Aristotle would



- probably admit that indirectly the drama has a moral influence, in enabling the emotional system to throw off some perilous stuff, certain elements of feeling, which, if left to themselves, might develop dangerous energy, and impede the free play of those vital functions on which the exercise of virtue depends. But whatever may be the indirect effect of the repeated operation of the *katharsis*, we may confidently say that Aristotle in his definition of tragedy is thinking, not of any such remote result, but of the immediate end of the art, of the aesthetic function which it fulfils.

It is only under certain conditions of art that the homoeopathic cure of a passion by a similar passion is possible. In order that an emotion may be not only excited but also allayed,—that the tumult of the mind may be resolved into a pleasurable calm,—the emotion, stirred by a fictitious representation, must divest itself of its purely selfish and material elements, and become part of a new order of things. The more exclusive and self-absorbed a passion is, the more does it resist *kathartic* treatment. The feelings excited must have their basis in the permanent and objective realities of life, and be capable of being generalised by the action of sympathy. The tragic *katharsis*

requires that suffering shall be exhibited in one of its comprehensive aspects ; that the deeds and fortunes of the actors shall attach themselves to larger issues, and the spectator himself be lifted above the special case, and brought face to face with universal law and the divine plan of the world.

Tragedy, as so understood, satisfies a universal human need. The fear and pity on and through which it operates are not, as some have maintained rare and abnormal emotions. All men, as Aristotle says,<sup>1</sup> are susceptible to them, some persons in an overpowering measure. For the modern, as for the ancient world, they are still among the primary instincts ; always present, if below the surface, and ready to be called into activity. The Greeks, from temperament, circumstances, and religious beliefs, may have been more sensitive to their influence than we are, and more likely to suffer from them in a morbid form. Greek tragedy, indeed, in its beginnings was but a wild religious excitement, a bacchic ecstasy. This aimless ecstasy was brought under artistic law. It was ennobled by objects worthy of an ideal emotion. The poets found out how the transport of human pity and

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* v. (viii.) 7. 1342 a 5-7.

human fear might, under the excitation of art, be dissolved in joy, and the pain escape in the purified tide of human sympathy.

## IX. PLOT AND CHARACTER IN TRAGEDY.

On no question of poetic criticism has Aristotle pronounced a more decisive opinion than on the relation of plot and character in tragedy. Plot, which in artistic representation is the equivalent of action in real life,<sup>1</sup> holds the first place.<sup>2</sup> The delineation of character stands second : it is strictly subordinate to the plot.<sup>3</sup>

Of the many reasons Aristotle gives for the pre-eminent position assigned to the plot, the most fundamental is this :—"Tragedy is an imitation not of men but of an action,—of human life and of happiness and unhappiness. Now these consist in action, the supreme end of life being a kind of action, not a mere quality of mind" (*πραξις τις ἐστίν, οὐ ποιότης*).<sup>4</sup> In other words, the end of

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 6. 6. 1450 a 3, ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἢ μίμησις.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 6. 9. 1450 a 15 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 6. 10. 1450 a 21, τὰ ἥθη συμπαραλαμβάνουσι διὰ τὰς πράξεις.  
6. 15. 1450 b 2, ἔστιν τε (ὁ μῦθος) μίμησις πράξεως καὶ διὰ ταύτην  
μάλιστα τῶν πραττόντων.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 6. 9. 1450 a 16-19.

life is a form of moral energy or activity ; we are called happy not in virtue of what we are but of what we do. And as life implies self-realisation through action, tragedy which is the mirror of human life and destiny is, in its primary idea, a representation of action, not a reproduction of character. Aristotle even commits himself to the statement, that there may be a tragedy without any delineation of character, though there cannot be a tragedy without action.<sup>1</sup> This, clearly, is said with some exaggeration ; the words must not be read too literally. Action without character is a meaningless abstraction, as is also character without action. In life they must exist together, being the two sides of one concrete reality.

Apart from overstatement, the true gist of the argument is conveyed in the words : "The plot is the first principle and as it were the soul of the tragedy."<sup>2</sup> The analogy here indicated goes deeper than might at once be apparent from the English words. The precise point of the comparison depends on the relation in which the soul

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 6. II. 1450 a 23-5, ἀνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγωδία, ἀνευ δὲ ἡθῶν γένοιτ' ἂν.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 6. 14. 1450 a 38, ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἶον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγωδίας.

- stands to the body in the Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>1</sup> A play is a kind of living organism. Its animating principle is the plot. As in the animal and vegetable world the soul or principle of life is the primary and moving force, the ἀρχὴ from which the development of the organism proceeds, so it is with the plot in tragedy. It is the origin of movement, the starting-point and basis of the play. Without it the play could not exist. It is the plot, again, which gives to the play its inner meaning and reality, as the soul does to the body. To the plot we look in order to learn what the play means; here lies its essence, its true significance. Lastly, the plot is "the end of the tragedy"<sup>2</sup> as well as the beginning. Through the plot the intention of the play is realised. The distinctive emotional effect, which the incidents are designed to produce, is inherent in the artistic structure of the whole. Above all, it is the plot that contains those reversals of fortune and other decisive moments, which most powerfully awake tragic feeling and excite the pleasure appropriate to tragedy.

<sup>1</sup> See Arist. *de Anim.* ii. 4. 415 b 7-415 b 21, where the soul is explained to be the efficient cause, the formal cause, and the final cause of the body.

<sup>2</sup> *Poet.* 6. 10. 1450 a 22, ὁ μῦθος τέλος τῆς τραγωδίας.

Aristotle's doctrine of the primary importance of action or plot has been disputed by many modern critics. Plot, it is argued, is a mere external framework designed to illustrate the working of character. Character is in thought prior to action and is implied in it. Events have no meaning, no interest, except so far as they are supposed to proceed from will. Action is defined, expressed, interpreted by character. The question, however, which this chapter of the *Poetics* raises is not whether one element can in logical analysis be shown ultimately to contain the other; we have rather to ask which of the two is the more fundamental as regards the artistic conception and dramatic structure of a play. We will therefore inquire shortly what in its simplest analysis is meant by the drama,—what it is that constitutes dramatic action. We shall thus be able roughly to determine the relation in which the two factors, action and character, stand to one another.

The drama, as its very name indicates, represents action. Etymologically, the verb from which the noun comes is the strongest of the words used to express the idea of *doing*; it denotes an activity manifesting itself in outward and energetic form. The characters are not

- described, they enact their own story, and so manifest themselves. We get to know them not by what we are told of them, but by what we see them do before our eyes. Without action a poem would be not a bad drama, but no drama at all. The form would not be dramatic, but epic or lyric, or whatever else it might be. Action, therefore, is the first artistic necessity of a play, the controlling condition of its existence.

But mere action is not enough ; an isolated deed, however terrible, however pathetic, has not in it the dramatic quality. Action, to be dramatic, must be exhibited in its development and in its results ; it must stand in reciprocal and causal relation to certain mental states. We need to see the feelings out of which it grows, the motive force of will which carries it to its conclusion ; and, again, to trace the effect of the deed accomplished upon the mind of the doer,—the emotions there generated as they become in turn new factors of action, and as they react thereby on the other dramatic characters. In the drama we have emotion translating itself into significant action.

Further, the dramatic action forms a complete whole : it is a coherent series of events,

standing in organic relation to one another, and bound together by the law of cause and effect. The internal centre, the pivot round which the whole system turns, is the plot. The characters are dramatic only so far as they are grouped round this centre, and work in with the movement of events towards an appointed end. Free and self-determined though they are, they exercise their freedom within a sphere which is prescribed by this primary condition of dramatic art. They reveal their personality not in all its fulness, but to such an extent as the rational course of the action may require. The situation and the circumstances in which they are placed, the other wills with which they come into collision, are precisely those which are best fitted to search out their weak places, to elicit their energy, and to exhibit their true forces in action.

But the drama not only implies emotion expressing itself in a complete action and tending towards a certain end; it also implies a struggle. We may even modify Aristotle's phrase and say, that the dramatic conflict, not the mere plot, is "the soul of the tragedy." In every drama there are forces brought into col-



- lision. Man is imprisoned within the limits of the actual. There is a necessity outside him which restricts his freedom, a superior power with which his will frequently conflicts. Again, there is the inward discord of his own divided will; there is, also, the struggle with other human wills which obstruct his own. The delineation of character is determined by the fact that a dramatic conflict of some kind has to be represented, and by the relation in which the several antagonistic forces stand to the plot as a whole. But while conflict is the soul of the drama, every conflict is not dramatic. In actual life, as Aristotle points out,<sup>1</sup> all action does not manifest itself in external acts; there is a silent activity of speculative thought, which in the highest sense may be called action, though it never utters itself in deed. But the action of the drama cannot consist in an inward activity that does not pass beyond the region of thought or of emotion. Even where the main interest is centred in the internal conflict, this conflict must have its outward as well as its inward side: it must manifest itself in individual acts, in concrete relations with the world outside;

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* iv. (vii.) 3. 1325 b 16-23.

it must bring the agent into collision with other personalities. We therefore exclude from the province of the drama purely mental conflicts,—action and reaction within the mind itself,—such as are the solitary struggles of the ascetic, the artist, the thinker. These are dramatic only when they are brought into a plot which gives them significance, and by which they become links in a chain of great events.

Only certain kinds of character, therefore, are capable of dramatic treatment. Character on its passive side, character expressing itself in passionate emotion and nothing more, is fit for lyrical poetry, but not for the drama. As action is the first necessity of the drama, so dramatic character has in it some vital and spontaneous force, which can make and mould circumstances, which sets obstacles aside. It is of the battling, energetic type. The emotions must harden into will and the will express itself in deed. Much more rarely, as in *Hamlet*, can character become dramatic by an intellectual and masterly inactivity, which offers resistance to the motives that prompt ordinary men to action. Events are then brought about, not by the free energy of will, but by acts, as

it were, of arrested volition, by forces such as operate in the world of dreamland. There is in Hamlet a strenuous inaction, a *not-acting*, which is in itself a form of action. Characters such as this are not purely passive, they have an originating and resisting force of their own. Most, however, of Shakespeare's characters, like the heroes of the Greek drama, are strong and dominant natures, they are of a militant quality of mind. They put their whole selves, their whole force of thinking and of willing, into what they do. Nothing is more wonderful than the resistless impulse, the magnificent energy of will, with which a Macbeth or a Richard III. go to meet their doom.

Plot, then, is not, as is sometimes said, a mere external, an accident of the inner life. In the action of the drama character is defined and revealed. The conception of the plot as a whole must be present to the poet's mind prior to the execution of the parts; the characters will grow and shape themselves in conformity with the main action. In maintaining, however, that plot is the first essential of the drama, it is not implied that the plot must be complicated; that a difficult skein is tangled in order

to excite curiosity, and unravelled again to relieve the feelings so excited. Neither in Aeschylus nor in Sophocles has plot for its own sake become a motive. Not even in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where the threads are more elaborately tangled and the texture of the plot is woven closer than in any other Greek tragedy, is dramatic complication an end in itself. The normal Greek tragedy is singularly simple in structure. We do not find, as in *King Lear* and elsewhere in the Shakespearian drama, two concurrent actions, which are skilfully interwoven in order to lead up to a tragic end. Some of the greatest Greek plays are not only devoid of intricate plot, but present an unchanging situation. In the *Prometheus* there is no outward movement, the main situation is at the end what it was at the beginning: the mental attitude of the hero is fixed and immovable, while a series of interlocutors come and go. We see before us the conflict of two superhuman wills, neither of which can yield to the other. Yet the dialogue is not mere conversation. Each speech of Prometheus is a step in the action; each word he utters is equivalent to a deed; it is the authentic voice of will which

• rises superior to physical bondage. The play is action throughout,—action none the less real because it consists not in doing, but in suffering. The reproach of want of movement which has been brought against the *Prometheus* has been also urged against Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. It is a drama, says Dr. Johnson, "in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe." Here again, however, a somewhat similar criticism is applicable. The speeches of Samson form an integral part of the action. The will-power which utters itself in dialogue is translated into deed, and culminates in a tragic catastrophe, as soon as the outward constraints are removed.

We may admit, then, with Aristotle that plot or action is the primary element in the artistic structure of the drama. But the case also presents another side, which is lightly touched by him, and which deserves to be brought into relief. Briefly stated it is this. The action which springs out of character and reflects character, alone satisfies the higher dramatic conditions.

Here there is a marked difference between epic and dramatic poetry. The epic poem relates a great and complete action, which attaches itself to

the fortunes of a people, or to the destiny of mankind, and which sums up the life of a period. The story and the deeds of those who pass across its wide canvas are linked with the larger movement of which the men themselves are but a part. The particular action rests upon forces outside itself. The hero is swept into the tide of events. The hairbreadth escapes, the surprises, the episodes, the marvellous incidents of epic story, only partly depend on the spontaneous energy of the hero.

The tragic drama, on the other hand, represents the destiny of the individual man. Action and character are here more closely intertwined. Even if the connection cannot be traced in every detail, it is generally manifest when we look to the whole tenor of the play. The action is the product of the characters and of the circumstances in which they are placed. It is but seldom that outward circumstances are entirely dominant over the forces of the spirit. If it is true that "things outward do draw the inward quality after them," it is no less true in tragedy that things inward draw the outward after them. The outer and the inner world are here in nearer correspondence and equivalence than in any other form of poetry. The element of chance is all but eliminated.

• An inner bond of probability or necessity binds events together. This inevitable sequence of cause and effect is the link that character forges as it expresses itself in action. A man's deeds become external to him; his character dogs and pursues him as a thing apart. The fate that overtakes the hero is no alien thing, but his own self recoiling upon him for good or evil. "Man's character," as Heraclitus said, "is his destiny" (*ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων*). To this vital relation between action and character is due the artistically compacted plot, the central unity of a tragedy. If, as Aristotle says, tragedy is a picture of life, it is of life rounded off, more complete, more significant, than any ordinary human life; revealing in itself the eternal law of things, summing up as in a typical example the story of human vicissitudes.

The dissent from Aristotle's doctrine that plot is the primary element in tragedy, is sometimes expressed in a modified form. Plot, it is admitted, was the primary element in the ancient drama; but, it is urged, the ancient drama was a drama of destiny; it obliterated character, while in the modern drama action is subordinate to character. Such is the view that De Quincey maintains.

Man, he says, being the "puppet of fate could not with any effect display what we call a character ;" for the will which is "the central pivot of character was obliterated, thwarted, cancelled by the dark fatalism which brooded over the Grecian stage." "Powerful and elaborate character . . . would have been wasted, nay would have been defeated and interrupted by the blind agencies of fate." Hence, as he argues, the Greek drama presents grand situations but no complex motives ; statuesque groups of tragic figures, but little play of human passion ; "no struggle internal or external."

It is strange that the Greeks of all people, and Aeschylus of all poets, should have been accused of depriving man of free agency and making him the victim of a blind fate. The central lesson of the Aeschylean drama is that man is the master of his own destiny : nowhere is his spiritual freedom more vigorously asserted. The retribution which overtakes him is not inflicted at the hands of cruel or jealous powers. It is the justice of the gods, who punish him for rebellion against their laws.<sup>1</sup> In ancient tragedy, the supernatural forces that order man's outward fortunes are, it is true, more visible than in the modern

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 106 ff.



- drama, but character is not obliterated, nor free personality effaced. The tragic action is no mere series of external incidents; it is a struggle of moral forces, the resultant of contending wills,—though a supreme necessity may guide the movement of events to unexpected issues. Plot does not overpower character; it is the very medium through which character is discerned, the touchstone by which its powers are tested.

Yet there is a certain sense in which we may say, that the modern drama lays increased stress on the delineation of individual character. On the Greek stage the development of character was impeded by the unpliant material with which the tragedian had to work. By consecrated usage he was confined to a circle of legends whose main outlines were already fixed. These had come down from a remote past and bore traces of the rude times which had given them birth. The heroic legends of Greece were woven into the texture of national life: they appealed to the people by many associations,—by local worships and familiar representations of art. Epic story, however, had in it elements which the purer and more reflective morality of the Periclean age was constrained to reject. The traditional legends

had to be adapted, as best they might, to the new ethical ideals.

In carrying out this task the poets were limited by the possibilities of plot. The great facts of the legends could not be set aside. The audience, familiar with their own heroic history, were not prepared for bold surprises. So far as the delineation of character itself was concerned, the utmost freedom of invention was allowed; the same dramatist might in successive tragedies exhibit a single person under various and inconsistent types of character. The point at which ethical portraiture was hampered was when the dramatic persons had to be fitted harmoniously into the framework of a particular plot. The details of the story might vary within wide limits, but the *end* was a thing given; and in the drama the end cannot but dominate the structure of the whole,—incidents and character alike. The weakness of the *dénouement*, as compared with the complication, of many Greek tragedies is the direct result of the controlling tradition of the plot.

Though the poets handled the myths freely, often transforming the inner spirit and meaning of the tale, yet they could not quite overcome the inherent difficulties presented by the problem.

- Aeschylus and Sophocles succeeded in deepening and humanising the archaic stories, and in liberating the characters from the influence of the past. But in Euripides the strain has become too great. The tissue of the material yields ; the old and the new world start asunder, the actions done belonging to the old order of things, the characters portrayed being the children of the poet's own generation.

The freedom of the Greek poet in delineating character was thus restricted by the choice of subject-matter. Add to this another consideration. The themes usually handled were simple in outline, the main issues were clear and free from the disturbing accidents of individuality. In the legends selected the working of the eternal laws which govern human life could be visibly discerned. The dramatic characters were of corresponding simplicity. Their personality was seized by the immediate intuition of the poet at some decisive moment of action. In the leading facts of their history human life was illustrated under one of its typical aspects. Aeschylus, at once poet and prophet, set forth in dramatic form the conflict between opposing principles,—between the implacable vengeance of an early age and the

mercy which tempers justice, as in the *Eumenides* : or again, as in the *Prometheus*, he takes us back to a far-off past, and depicts the strife between two antagonists, each of them divine, who are representative of different dispensations, and hints at a future harmony, when divine Might should no longer be divorced from Wisdom and Beneficence. Sophocles, too, brings rival principles into collision. In the *Antigone* the divine and human law stand opposed, and the religious duty towards the family triumphs over the claims of civic obedience. In the *Philoctetes*, the instincts of natural truthfulness finally carry the day against diplomatic falsehood for the public good.

Greek Tragedy, in its most characteristic examples, dramatises not the mere story of human calamities, but the play of great principles, the struggle between contending moral forces. The heroes are themselves the concrete embodiment of these forces. Religion, the State, the Family,—these were to a Greek the higher and enduring realities, the ideal ends for which he lived. Hence in the Greek drama, patriotism, wifely or sisterly devotion, all those elementary emotions which cluster round home and country, are the motives which chiefly impel to action and

- call forth the ardour of self-sacrifice. No purely personal and exclusive passions animate these tragic heroes : they are free from inward discord and self-contradiction : the ends they pursue are objective and rest on a belief in the abiding reality of the social organism. The characters hereby gain universal meaning and validity : they are not of their own age and country only, but can claim kinship with mankind.

The modern drama introduces us into another world of poetic emotion. A richer and more varied inner life is opened up. The sense of personality is deepened. Even the idiosyncrasies of human nature become material to the dramatist. In Shakespeare character assumes inexhaustible variety. Its aspects are for ever changing, discordant elements meet and are blended. The contradictions do not easily yield to psychological analysis ; we seek to explain them, but we find ourselves dealing only with abstractions. Not until the persons enact their story before us, and are seen in the plenitude of organic life, do we feel that they are possible and real creations. The discovery of unsuspected depths in human nature has brought into prominence the subjective side of ethical portraiture, and subjective modes

of viewing life. Love, honour, ambition, jealousy are the prevailing motives of modern tragedy ; and of these love, the most exclusive of all the passions, dominates all other motives.

Shakespeare in deepening the subjective personality of men does not, however, lose sight of the objective ends of life and of the corresponding phases of character. Between these two sides of human experience he maintains a just balance. The particular emotions he stamps, as did the Greeks, with the impress of the universal. Nor does he permit the dramatised action to become subservient to the portrayal of individual character. Other poets, who have explored, though less profoundly, the recesses of human nature, and reproduced the rarer and more abnormal states of feeling, have been unable to rise above the pathological study of man,—a study as dangerous as it is fascinating to the dramatist. Indeed the conscious analysis of character and motive, even where the study of morbid conditions is not added, has marred the dramatic effect of many modern productions. Goethe with all his poetic genius did not surmount this danger. His reflective, emotional characters, who view life through the medium of individual feeling, seldom

- have the energy of will requisite to carry out a tragic action. They are described by the mouth of others, they express themselves in lyrical utterances of incomparable beauty. But the result is, that where Shakespeare would have given us his historical dramas, Goethe gives only dramatic biographies. And, in general, the modern introspective habit, the psychological interest felt in character, has produced many dramatic lyrics, but few dramas.

The increased emphasis attaching to individual portraiture is seen again in the tendency of the romantic drama to exhibit character in growth,—in each successive stage of its evolution. A Greek tragedy takes a few significant scenes carved out of the hero's life, which are bound together by a causal chain and constitute a single and impressive action. Much that the moderns would include in the play itself is placed outside the drama, and forms a groundwork of circumstances, antecedent to the action but necessary to explain it. The Greek custom of representing four dramas in a day placed a natural limit on the length of each play and on the range of the action. The romantic drama aimed at a more comprehensive representation ; a single play in its

scope and compass approached to the dimensions of a Trilogy. Sir Philip Sidney gently ridicules the quickened pace with which time is compelled to move, in order to condense into a few hours the events of as many years. "Now of time they are more liberall, for ordinary it is that two young Princes fall in love. After many traverces, she is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy, he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space."

The dramatic theme is frequently enlarged in modern tragedy so that the entire process may be traced, from the moment when a deed lies dormant as a germ in the mind, till it has ripened into action and unfolded itself in all its consequences. As the period embraced by the action is extended, and the relations with the outer world become more complex, it is only natural that the characters should expand in new directions and undergo essential changes. A wider range was here opened up for dramatic portraiture. It was not, of course, an untried region of art. The Greeks had exhibited character as moulded by the plot and developed under pressure from without, or through impulses which operated from within.



- Indeed every drama must, in some measure, show the play and counterplay of those forces which rule the outer and the inner world. The process by which feeling is consolidated into a deed cannot but leave its mark on the mind of the agent. Antigone suffers the natural reaction from high strained emotion. Neoptolemus becomes a changed person in the progress of the action, though the change is merely to restore him to his true self, which for the moment he had lost. Even Prometheus, grand in his immobility, is in some sense worked upon by the persons and the scenes which pass before him. His will, unconquerable from the first, expresses itself in tones still more defiant at the close.

In all these instances we have character in process of becoming. Wherever, in short, an action grows and expands according to dramatic laws, character, or at least feeling, must move in concert with it. But the extent to which growth and movement in the character accompany the march of the action is very various. The ancient stage furnishes us with no such complete instance of character-development as we have, for example, in *Macbeth*. It is the peculiar delight of the moderns to follow the course of such an evolution,

to be present at the determining moment of a man's career, to watch the dawning of a passion, the shaping of a purpose, and to pursue the deed to its final accomplishment. We desire not only to know what a man was, and how he came to be it, but to be shown each step in the process, each link in the chain ; and we are the more interested if we find that the gradual course of the dramatic movement has wrought a complete change in the original character. In this sense we may admit that the modern drama has brought the delineation of character into new and stronger relief.

But when we have taken into account all the minor variations of structure which the modern drama has undergone ; when we have allowed for the greater complexity of the plot, the greater prominence given to the more subjective and individual aspects of character, the deeper interest taken in the unfolding of character and in its manifold developments ; yet plot and character, in their essential relation, still hold the place sketched for them in the *Poetics*, and assigned to them on the Greek stage. Plot is artistically the first necessity of the drama. For the drama, in its true idea, is a poetical representation of a complete and typical action, whose lines converge on a determined end ;

- which evolves itself out of human emotion and human will, in such a manner that action and character are each in turn the outcome of the other.

Such a drama was the creation of Greece, and of all her creations perhaps the greatest. Epic and lyric poetry have everywhere sprung up independently. Dramatic spectacles, religious or secular, are found in every country, and at all periods of civilisation. Dramatic narratives, such as the *Book of Job*, dramatic lyrics, such as the *Song of Solomon*, are among the forms of composition which meet us in the Old Testament. Lyrical dramas, which in their constituent elements recall the first beginnings of the Greek drama, have existed in China and Japan. India has produced vast poems which pass under the name of dramas, but which want both the unity of action and the spiritual freedom which the drama proper implies. The Greek drama is the harmonious fusion of two elements which never before had been perfectly blended. Lyrical in its origin, epic in the nature of its materials, it is at once an expression of passionate feeling and the story of an action ; it embodies emotion, but an emotion which grows into will and issues in

deeds. If the lyrical utterance of feeling had remained the dominant, as it was the original element in a Greek tragedy, it would have been left for some other people to create the tragic drama. As it was, the Greeks fixed unalterably its distinctive form and the artistic principle of its structure.

THE END











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